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A photograph of Rabindranath Tagore painting
A painting in green by Rabindranath Tagore
A portrait of Dwijendranath Tagore by Mukul Dey

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POST-WAR BUSINESS UNDERTAKING

Indian industry in all its branches must have every opportunity of expanding after the War. In fact, the process of industrialisation has already started and before long it is expected to make vital contribution towards the nation's economic well-being.

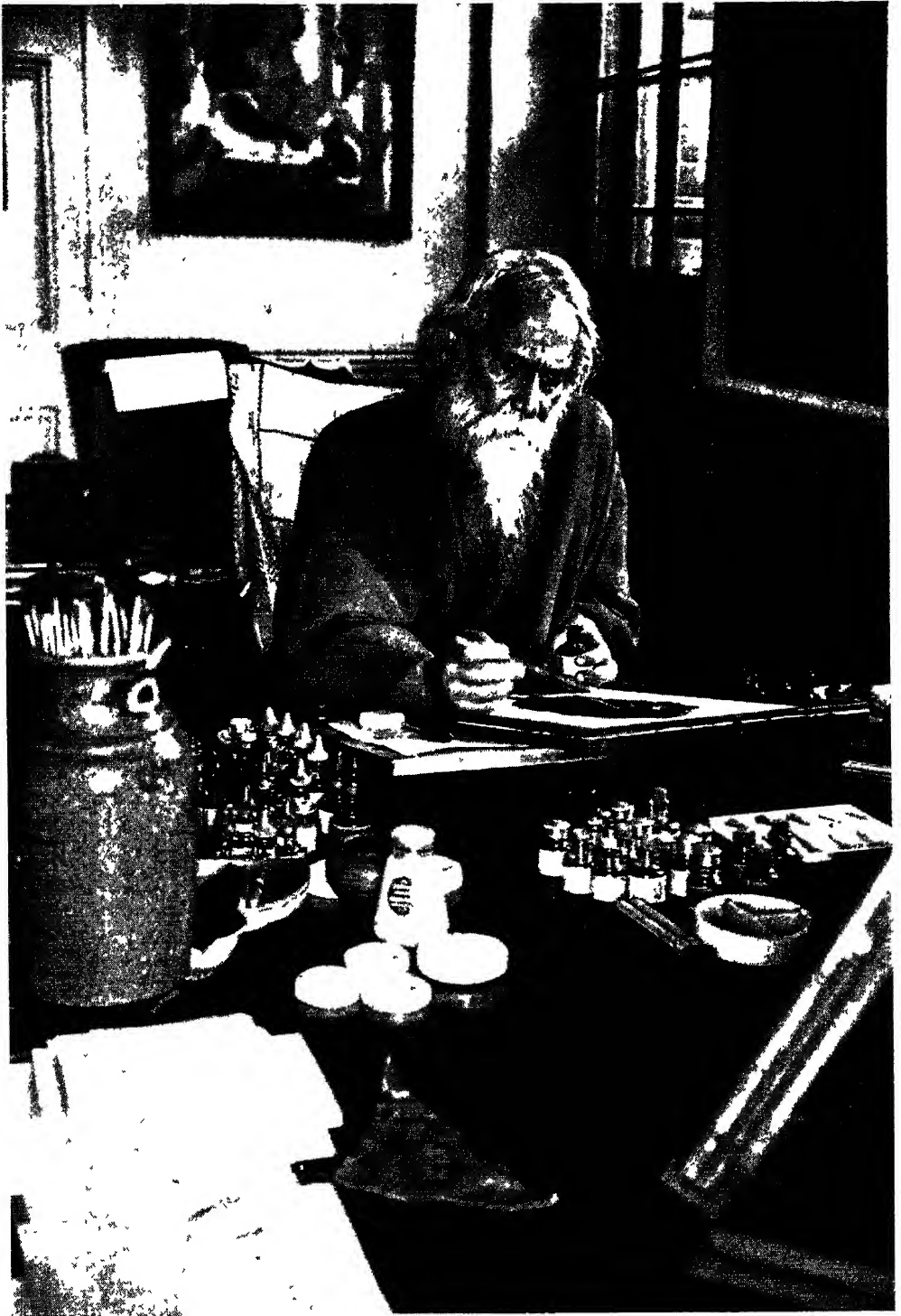
Post-war conditions will call for a far-sighted policy concerning financial aid the industries may need. The "City" has financed the largest number of national industries and is prepared to consider enquiries from promising undertakings conducted under efficient management.

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The brush replaces the pen

Poet at the house of Mr Mukul Dey in Calcutta, 20 Feb. 1932



MY PICTURES

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

WHEN, at the age of five, I was compelled to learn and to repeat the lessons from my text-book, I had the notion that literature had its mysterious manifestation on the printed pages, that it represented some supernatural tyranny of an immaculate perfection. Such a despairing feeling of awe was dissipated from my mind when by chance I discovered in my own person that verse-making was not beyond the range of an untrained mind and tottering handwriting. Since then my sole medium of expression has been words, followed at sixteen by music, which also came to me as a surprise.

In the meanwhile the modern art movement, following the line of the oriental tradition, was started by my nephew Abanindranath. I watched his activities with an envious mood of self-diffidence, being thoroughly convinced that my fate had refused me passport across the strict boundaries of letters.

But one thing which is common to all arts is the principle of rhythm which transforms inert materials into living creations. My instinct for it and my training in its use led me to know that lines and colours in art are no carriers of information ; they seek their rhythmic incarnation in pictures. Their ultimate purpose is not to illustrate or to copy some outer fact or inner vision, but to evolve a harmonious wholeness which finds its passage through our eyesight into imagination. It neither questions our mind for meaning nor burdens it with unmeaningness, for it is, above all, meaning.

Desultory lines obstruct the freedom of our vision with the inertia of their irrelevance. They do not move with the great march of all things. They have no justification to exist and therefore they rouse up against them their surroundings ; they perpetually disturb peace. For this reason the scattered scratches and corrections in my manuscripts cause me annoyance. They represent regrettable mischance, like a gapingly foolish crowd stuck in a wrong place, undecided as to how or where to move on. But if the spirit of a dance is inspired in the heart of that crowd, the unrelated many would find a perfect unity and be relieved of its hesitation between to be and not to be. I try to make my corrections dance, connect them in a rhythmic relationship and transform accumulation into adornment.

This has been my unconscious training in drawing. I find disinterested pleasure in this work of reclamation, often giving to it more

time and care than to my immediate duty in literature that has the sole claim upon my attention, often aspiring to a permanent recognition from the world. It interests me deeply to watch how lines find their life and character, as their connection with each other develops in varied cadences, and how they begin to speak in gesticulations. I can imagine the universe to be a universe of lines which in their movements and combinations pass on their signals of existence along the interminable chain of moments. The rocks and clouds, the trees, the waterfalls, the dance of the fiery orbs, the endless procession of life send up across silent eternity and limitless space a symphony of gestures with which mingles the dumb wail of lines that are widowed gypsies roaming about for a chance union of fulfilment.

In the manuscript of creation there occur erring lines and erasures, solitary incongruities, standing against the world principle of beauty and balance, carrying perpetual condemnation. They offer problems and therefore material to the VISVAKARMA, the Great Artist, for they are the sinners whose obstreperous individualism has to be modulated into a new variation of universal concord.

And this was my experience with the casualties in my manuscripts, when the vagaries of the ostracized mistakes had their conversion into a rhythmic inter-relationship, giving birth to unique forms and characters. Some assumed the temperate exaggeration of a probable animal that had unaccountably missed its chance of existence, some a bird that only can soar in our dreams and find its nest in some hospitable lines that we may offer it in our canvas. Some lines showed anger, some placid benevolence, through some lines ran an essential laughter that refused to apply for its credential to the shape of a mouth which is a mere accident. These lines often expressed passions that were abstract, evolved characters that hung upon subtle suggestions. Though I did not know whether such unclassified apparitions of non-deliberate origin could claim their place in decent art, they gave me intense satisfaction and very often made me neglect my important works. In connection with this came to my mind the analogy of music's declaration of independence. There can be no question that originally melody accompanied words, giving interpretation to the sentiments contained in them. But music threw off this bond of subservience and represented moods abstracted from words, and characters that were indefinite. In fact, this liberated music does not acknowledge that feelings which can be expressed in words are essential for its purpose, though they may have their secondary place in musical structure. This right of independence has given music its great-

ness, and I suspect that evolution of pictorial and plastic art develops on this line, aiming to be freed from an absolute alliance with natural facts or incidents.

However, I need not formulate any doctrine of art but be contented by simply saying that in my case my pictures did not have their origin in trained discipline, in tradition and deliberate attempt at illustration, but in my instinct for rhythm, my pleasure in harmonious combination of lines and colours.

London,
July 2, 1930.

There are seekers of wisdom and seekers of wealth,

I seek thy company so that I may sing.

•

YOU AND I

By Rabindranath Tagore

You have started your journey,
I have come to the end.
Both of us take our shares
in rounding the cycle of days.

You have the light for your work
and the joy of comradeship,
I have the lonesome night
and the silent brooding stars.

You have the path on the shore,
mine is the ebbing water,
You plan and build your house,
the ropes of my tent are torn.

Your hoarding grows and grows,
mine is ever on the wane,
You are full of care,
without fear am I.

You and I combine
in rounding the cycle of days.

[The author's own translation as found in one of his manuscripts. The original Bengali : *Tomār holo śuru āmār holo sārā* (song : *Gītābitan*).]

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NAZRUL ISLAM

By BUDDHADEVA BOSE

NAZRUL ISLAM is the greatest poetic energy in Bengali literature after Satyendranath Datta. When—about a quarter of a century from now—he first appeared on our literary scene, Satyendra Datta's fame was at its very highest, so much so that for some time Datta's influence had surpassed that of Tagore himself. Young Nazrul, just back from Mesopotamia after having served in the last world war, fell naturally under Datta's spell, but at the same time he managed to proclaim, loudly and unmistakably, his own individuality. Here was a new voice, and no mistake. Hot, impetuous, extravagant, his verses careered wildly through Bengal, reaching remote corners with amazing swiftness. Blest by the people, cursed by the rulers (several of his volumes are still under ban), his books of poems had the extraordinary good fortune of running into quick editions; his popularity was as immediate and as immense as was Saratchandra's in the sphere of fiction. I should say that he is the only instance in our recent literary history where a young poet was immediately acclaimed by the general reading public. Such popularity is suspect. And rightly: for history teaches that the shattering successes of the day are generally the least durable part of any literature. There is always a ready market for tripe; masterpieces have to wait. What is most remarkable about Nazrul is that he combined in him the qualities of a good poet and a popular poet—and how rare this combination is every student of literature knows.

Nazrul's appearance on our literary scene synchronised with that great upheaval in Indian life known as the First Non-co-operation Movement. In those fiery days, when the whole of India was convulsed, we in Bengal found in Nazrul Islam a poet who voiced the message of the moment; his poetry seemed to slake the very thirst created by the New Initiation; his words were vivid emblems of the storm that had risen in each heart. He came to fame with a long, rhapsodic poem called *Bidrohi* (The Rebel), and has since been known as BIDROHI-KAVI or the Rebel-poet. *Bidrohi* was succeeded by many other poems of equal or greater merit, and very soon Nazrul Islam, still in his twenties, came to be recognised as one of the considerable poets of Bengal. Freedom from bondage is the key-note of the poems of his first phase, wild, exuberant, delirious poems, intoxicated and intoxicating. Like D. L. Roy and Satyendra Datta, he wrote on Hindu and Muslim subjects with equal ease, on Durga Puja as well as Kemal Pasha; his mind, fed on the myths and legends of both, and quickened by the Non-co-operation movement, was at home as much in

the Gangetic plains as in the Arabian desert, and sought to infuse in every topic the ardour of the new insurgent India. The craft of verse alone could not provide enough outlet for his abounding spirits, and so he founded a weekly which he called *Dhumketu* (The Comet). *Dhumketu* started with appropriate blessings from the parent sun, that is Rabindranath, and after an appropriately meteoric career, appropriately landed Nazrul into jail. Happy and insouciant, Nazrul composed patriotic songs in jail, took up hunger strike,* broke it after forty days, served his term, came out, married and did as much of settling down as was possible for a man of his restless temper. At this time, he contributed several poems to *Langal* (The Plough), a weekly started by Muzzaffar Ahmed, the leader of the non-official Communist Party of pre-People's-War days. *Songs of Equality*, *The Song of the Peasant*—these titles themselves suggest the tone of the poems of this group. In these he sang of equality, of justice, of the broad principles of humanism, and sang in a loud and lusty voice. It would be banal to label these poems "socialist" or "communist" ; certainly they have nothing in common with communist writing of today.

Roughly speaking, Nazrul had produced his entire body of considerable poetry by this time, and after this, that is, in his early thirties, he turned seriously to songs. He is as gifted in music as in poetry, and from the earliest stage of his literary career, he had been composing songs which he himself set to music and himself sang to an ever-widening circle of friends and admirers. His heroic or patriotic songs, in Bengal called *swadeshi* songs, had begun to gain currency among the general public, and there was a demand for more, which he satisfied with a most startling sheaf of *ghazal* songs. It was an unexpected—and to some, not laudable—change from the heroic to the erotic, but both suited his genius, and he transferred to Bengali the tender charm of the Persian *ghazal* with such success that soon his *ghazals* began to be on everybody's lips—the elegant young lady could not disdain them, nor the street boy refrain from them. The spate of *ghazals* over, song still followed song, lovely tunes wedded to a poet's words took the entire country by storm. The manufacturers of gramophone records were quick to take ample advantage of his talents, with the result that for the last ten years or so of his active life, he had been pouring forth an incessant torrent of made-to-order songs : love-songs,

* Rabindranath sent a telegram to Nazrul Islam saying, "Give up hunger-strike, our literature claims you." The Jail authorities returned the telegram with the superscription ; "Addressee not found." While Nazrul was still in jail, Rabindranath dedicated to him his then latest work, *Basanta* (Spring), a song-play.

Kali-songs, Islamic songs, season-songs, comic songs, songs about Radha and Krishna, songs about Mecca and Medina, dancing songs and prancing songs, flimsy songs meant for *pan*-shops, sombre songs for the religious-minded. It is not surprising that many of these songs, made mechanically for mechanical reproduction, lack the literary beauty of their forerunners ; what *is* surprising is that some of them, despite their commercial genesis, have come out as lovely poems. All these songs have not yet been collected in book-form, and in the world of music, Nazrul-songs are at the moment suffering a temporary eclipse. Looking back, one would rate him as one of Bengal's most eminent composers. It is said that the total number of his songs is larger than that of Tagore's, but this does not seem likely. It is very likely, however, that the total number of Nazrul's recorded songs is larger than that of Tagore's, or, for that matter, of any other single composer in the world.

Nazrul's personal life offers excellent material to the biographer. His life has been the most brilliant, colourful, varied and, in its final phase, the most tragic, after Madhusudan Datta's. Born of poor parents in the district of Burdwan, he had never had any proper schooling, and there was little to check his excessive vitality and turbulent disposition. For some time he was associated with a troupe of village singers, for some time he left his home and lived with a family in a Mymensingh village, for some time he worked in a baker's shop at Asansol. Thus passed his boyhood, and, in adolescence he enlisted for the war which, possibly, marks his final break with his family. Born a Muslim, married to a Hindu, he has been adored and abused by Hindus and Muslims alike, himself free from any narrow creed. To meet him has been to love him, for his is one of the most picturesque and attractive personalities in our recent history. One of Nature's own Bohemians, he has passed his life in a divinely irresponsible manner, flooding his ambience with laughter and song, with life and light and gaiety. He has never shone in conversation, but his very presence has been enough. And what a treat it was to listen to him singing his own songs ! He had not a good voice, but the enthusiasm, the vibrant joy he brought to his singing kept his audience for hours, and for hours together he could and would sing, aided by tea and *pan* galore. All his friends doted on him, and he was always making new friends. A shocking spendthrift (again like Madhusudan Datta), utterly reckless in business transactions, never caring for the morrow, he lavished his splendid life-force on others, perhaps impoverishing himself. On this brilliant scene the first tragic shadow was

cast when his wife was stricken with paralysis. The doctors despaired, and the poet turned to supernatural cures. His face began to show signs of age ; he took to yoga, to mysticism, to secret rites. And one day we heard with dismay that Nazrul Islam is under the observation of mental specialists. He had been to a war, he had been to jail, he had been poor, he had been rich ; he had shouted himself hoarse in Calcutta football fields, he had spent silent hours over the chess board ; he had even started a gramophone shop (pre-destined to liquidation !) ; he had been loved by every notable contemporary and by numerous un-notables ; he had been a living negation of all prejudices that sap the heart (orthodox Brahmin ladies have looked upon him as a son) ; his name had been a synonym for irresistible charm. And today he is mentally deranged, confined, cast off from life, with his wife chained to a paralytic bed. And he is only forty-six. The last days of Madhusudan and Henrietta are an easy parallel. But let us hope that this is not the end. Let us hope and pray for his recovery, for his return to life. And meanwhile, let us put on record our love and gratefulness for all that he has given us in the last twenty-five years of his frenziedly active life, let us honour and appraise him.

Nazrul is a loud poet, his poetry is wild and boisterous ; and that accounts for his easy popularity. His art, like Kipling's, is the art of investing a loud noise with poetry. The weakness of such poetry is that it is liable to pitiful falls. The poet's mind, lulled by the sound and fury, might produce a masterpiece in a semi-conscious inspired moment as well as fail to wake up even when they signify nothing. Nazrul's case is typical of this. He has given us many splendid poems ; he has also written much that is mere rant. His weakness is specially manifest in his love-poems and nature-poems ; these—with a few exceptions—are tainted by sentimentality, turgid with uncontrolled, unmeaning effusion. Nazrul was never meant to be a prose-writer, yet he tried his hand at prose, at story-writing and pamphleteering, and it is only natural that the excessive exuberance that made his best poetry brave and ardent rendered whatever prose he wrote merely effervescent.

Irrepressible facility has ever been the cardinal virtue of Nazrul's work, and also its deadly sin. As one reads him, one feels that words simply gushed forth from his mind, that he never paused to think, to ponder, to polish, and was rather at a loss where to stop. Despairing editor-friends used to lock him up in a room with pen, paper and a copious supply of tea, and lo ! a poem was ready in an hour. Marvellous and enviable, no

doubt ; there is nothing like it when it works. But when it does not—and how often that is the case !—the results are deplorable. It is a gorgeous gift, but not a dependable one. In this respect Nazrul is somewhat like Byron ; we have in him the same raw, violent, unbridled power, the thoughtless, ceaseless flow, that easy, careless handling of technique, that thinness of substance, looseness of form and, above all, those sins against taste which characterised the works of Byron. What Goethe said of Byron is literally true about Nazrul : “The moment he thinks he is a child.”

In his poem *Bidrohi* Nazrul said : “I am ever a child, ever an adolescent.” This, with profound irony, has turned true in the poet’s literary life. For twenty-five years he has written like a boy of genius ; he has never grown up, never become an adult ; the sequence of his works does not give a history of development ; what he wrote at thirty-five is not markedly different from what he wrote at twenty. As he advanced in age, he did not attain depth, maturity, compression ; the pure flame of contemplation never touched his lamp ; he was never lifted from the world of sensation to the world of thought. As Rabindranath had once remarked about one of his elder contemporaries, “he had genius, but his genius was a bad housewife.” Of power Nazrul had plenty ; but he lacked discipline, he lacked culture, he lacked taste. So his power took him only half way ; he could not climb the winding stair that leads to the tower. He is not a great poet, but a true one, and his work is simple, passionate and plentiful.

It is in his songs that Nazrul has given us his best. On the whole, his songs, as poems, are more satisfactory than the poems themselves, for the very limited space of a song cut out many of his congenital faults. His best songs are likely to prove the most durable part of his work. In *swadeshi* songs, he is the next man after Rabindranath and D. L. Roy, and some of his love-lyrics are extremely beautiful. A small number of his songs is perfect ; that the number is not larger is due to his incorrigible bad taste. Many a lovely song has been marred by one inelegant word, many a flower bitten by the worm of coarseness. His contribution to music, too, is important, for he devised a most remarkable variety and richness of tunes, restored some lost *raginis* and even created some new ones. If only he had taste, we might proudly have honoured him as another great song-maker after Rabindranath. But one fault has maimed many qualities.

However, it would still be true to say Nazrul can best be represented by a careful selection of his songs. In them we would come across a

delicate and sensitive spirit, reflecting the colour and wonder of this earth, now sad, now joyful, now bold and upright like a soldier, now pale and dreamy as a lover. His marching songs are rightly renowned, but he has at the same time, free access to the sanctuary of love, and is not a stranger to humour. His versatility in song is noteworthy ; every mood seemed to call from him the right sort of phrase. It is not certain whether posterity will remember him as the "rebel-poet" or the "poet of the have-nots" ; but Time will wear his garland of songs. Perhaps the garland is small, but it will endure. It appears that the Bengali public that not so long ago went crazy over him is already beginning to forget him ; certainly he is no longer a fashion. He got from the hand of fashion what fashion could give, and now the time has come to look at him from the viewpoint of posterity, as much as is possible for so near contemporaries. There is no doubt that he will come back, if not in flesh at least in spirit, purged of all froth, reduced in bulk, shrunken, perhaps, but more shapely, more beautiful, so that we shall behold in him an expression of the essence of poetry. A day will come when his popularity will be a thing of remote past, and the best in him will re-appear in untarnished, untrammelled splendour. Then will Nazrul Islam come to his own ; today let us begin to give him his due.



CULTURAL RELATIONS AND THE PROBLEM OF RESPONSE

By DR. ALEX ARONSON

[This is the first chapter of a book entitled *Europe Looks at India*, which will be published in the near future. It is an attempt at assessing those literary and social forces that go to the making of cultural relationships, with special reference to India and Europe during the last 150 years.—*Ed.*]

THE study of cultural relations requires a thorough knowledge of the various phenomena that contributed to the development of culture in two or more countries, art and literature, religion and philosophy, social structure and political tendencies, standards of conduct and morality, and, last but not least, the values attached to the attitudes that have come into being during the process of civilization. Far from being a merely intellectual subject-matter to be treated academically, it involves the scholar in an analysis of what might be called cultural dynamics, a study of parallel developments, influences, and cross-currents, in the civilization of countries or continents, and the way they affect human beings, both as individuals and as members of a social group in a given historical and social context.

The civilization of Europe is not a homogenous whole. And yet scholars, who have dealt with the problem of response, and in particular the response of Europeans to India, always started with the assumption that the civilization of a country or a continent is something static, easily definable, and limited to the intellectual make-up of a few writers, poets, and philosophers. But civilization is always a process ; not a being, but a becoming. It is reflected not only in the mind of man, but far more clearly in behaviour-patterns, moral standards and valuations. A human being who responds to an alien civilization does so within the context of his social group, its thought and behaviour patterns that have infused into him a particular set of moral standards and values. The problem of response is very largely identical with the problem of how one form of cultural evolution adjusts itself or fails to adjust itself to a different process of civilization. The conflict between cultures is not so much a conflict of "minds" as of standards, attitudes and values. It is a conflict between different, and frequently diametrically opposed, forms of cultural dynamics, and it is no good assuming that there exists a mysterious mechanism of response shaping and re-shaping the intellectual destiny of people, regardless of the time in which they live, the social structure of which they are a part, the economic system of which they are both the builders and the victims, the values they attach to certain given conditions of existence.

This essay, therefore, is first of all, a challenge against complacent

scholarship with its artificial, though academic, formulas, its deeply rooted intellectual bias, its prejudice in favour of abstract and generalised definitions. It is a challenge also against all the pseudo-scientific attempts to explain away the problem of response in terms of "racial" idiosyncrasy, of intellectual superiority or inferiority, of apparently indisputable cultural abstractions, of political or economic dishonesty. This challenge is justified by the importance the problem has assumed in recent times. And just as the political and economic struggle of our age can be solved only by a re-valuation of those very forces that created the conflict, so also the cultural conflict will be solved only by the application of new values and the training of new attitudes. For what would such a challenge be worth, if it did not ultimately lead to the formation of a more mature, collective intelligence and the creation of saner relation-patterns between one continent and another ?

Instances are not lacking in Europe when men of outstanding intellectual gifts have made statements of a most misleading kind about the presupposed relationship between East and West and the way the Western response to India should be "regulated". Sometimes such statements have had a very far-reaching influence, evoking counter-statements, public discussions and controversies, and often leading to personal abuses or dogmatic pronouncements on a variety of subjects quite disconnected from the problem in question. Each one of the participants in such public controversies is, first of all, out to prove his own thesis regardless of any argument to the contrary. An instance to the point is Maeterlinck's famous statement about "the eastern and the western lobe" in man's mental make-up. This statement, based as it is, upon a purely fictitious hypothesis, evoked many replies equally founded on hypothetical assumptions, and is probably still being discussed by well-meaning intellectuals all over Europe and America. The statement, it may be recalled, was made during the last war. It indeed is symptomatic of the abstract concepts commonly used by European intellectuals when discussing the problem of response between East and West : "The one lobe here produces reason, science, consciousness ; the other yonder secrets intuition, religion, the sub-conscious. . . . More than once they have endeavoured to penetrate one another, to mingle, to work together ; but the Western lobe, at any rate on the most active expanse of our globe, has heretofore paralysed and almost annihilated the efforts of the other. We owe to it extraordinary progress in all material sciences, but also catastrophes, such as those we are undergoing today. . . . It is time to awaken the paralysed Eastern lobe."

Accordingly to Maeterlinck, the whole problem boils down to a merely intellectual proposition, the supposed division of the human brain into two watertight compartments, called Eastern and Western, the predominance of the latter in recent times and the necessity to "awaken" the former which had remained "paralysed" for such a long time. Maeterlinck, significantly enough, is hardly concerned at all with the response of one continent to another, but rather with a purely *mental* adjustment which, in his opinion, is required to "stabilise" once again the Western mind. Whether that is at all possible without a re-valuation of the very attitudes that underlie all human behaviour, including of course thought-patterns, does not seem to concern Maeterlinck here. He has given us his formula. It is for us to apply it to living reality. No wonder that most intellectuals failed in their attempt. Nothing, indeed, is more significant in an analysis of the problem of response between East and West than the frustration that periodically overcomes the intellectuals, poets, and scholars, in Europe who, genuinely in search of a deeper understanding, are confronted again and again by meaningless formulas, abstractions, and concepts. Their greatest disappointment is when their cherished formula cannot be applied and proves to be unsuitable to actually existing conditions of reality. Then their desire to understand turns into bitterness and deliberate misinterpretation, the open hatred of the frustrated scholar when confronted by something he cannot grasp "intellectually". It is out of such an attitude that arise those amazing schemes, built up with all the pedantry of European scholarship, concerning the racial superiority of the "Aryans", as in Gobineau, the superiority of the "Teutons", as in H. S. Chamberlain, the "senility" of Indian civilization, as in Hegel, or of Buddhism, as in Spengler. And with an enviable, though enervating, thoroughness they will put forth argument after argument, footnote after footnote, quotation after quotation, to prove their main thesis. Once their thesis established, all they had to do was to apply it, point by point to what they considered to be "reality". Their ignorance which at times was appalling, could always be hidden behind a veil of cynical condescension masquerading as scholarship. And there was nothing to prevent them from being frankly contemptuous whenever the "paralysed Eastern lobe" interfered too much with their well-ordered plans and intellectual hypotheses.

What happened in Europe during the last 150 years has frequently been compared to that period in Western civilization known by the name of Renaissance. This expansion of the mind, in the opinion of traditional

scholarship, was entirely due to a re-awakening of that same "paralysed Eastern lobe" of which Maeterlinck spoke during the last war. According to Sir S. Radhakrishnan, just as the consciousness of Europe "was enlarged in the period of the Renaissance by the revelation of the classical culture of Greece and Rome, there is a sudden growth of the spirit today effected by the new inheritance of Asia, with which India is linked up. . . ." ¹ Such a statement, however justified in a general manner of speaking, requires some qualifications. What exactly is meant by the "growth of the spirit today"? Does this growth comprise the whole of Europe or only some privileged countries? Does it include all the population groups of a country regardless of its social or economic stratification, or does it apply only to a minority group, an élite of intellectuals, scholars, and poets? Has this growth of the spirit during the last 150 years in any fundamental way affected the thought or behaviour-patterns of the people of Europe (as the Renaissance undoubtedly did)? What precisely constitutes this "new inheritance of Asia"? Do we find it reflected to the same extent in works of art, literature, or philosophy, as the culture of Greece and Rome was reflected in the works of the Renaissance?

Some of these questions, we hope, will be answered in the course of this book. A few preliminary remarks, however, will be necessary. Cultural relations are not established by some vague entity called the human spirit, but by men and women living within the particular historical context of their age, and responding, due to a large variety of motives, to an alien civilization. It is indeed the problem of motivation that concerns us here most. The fact that human beings respond to something that is foreign to their outlook on life is in itself hardly of any significance at all, unless we can also determine the reasons, often hidden behind intellectual arguments and ratiocination, that made them look in another continent, be it for inspiration or knowledge or a new way of life. For the motives that make men respond in one way or another to an alien civilization are often elusive, and only by a study of the historical context itself can they be properly understood.

It is no doubt true that this growth of the European mind took place at a time when spiritually Europe had become saturated with its own past, and when intellectuals longed for a wider and larger view of life than the one that confined them to classical antiquity and Christianity, the two forces that had shaped European civilization during the last 2000 years.

1 *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. Oxford, 1989, p. 15.

Western scholars, long before Maeterlink, looked upon the "paralysed Eastern lobe" as the only hope for the spiritual rejuvenation of Europe. Michelet, for instance, speaking about the *Ramayana*, wrote in 1864: "Whoever has done or will too much, let him drink from this deep cup a long draught of life and youth.... Everything is narrow in the West—Greece is small and I stifle; Judaea is dry and I pant. Let me look a little towards lofty Asia, the profound East...." Nor indeed was Michelet the first to express in words that new awareness of spiritual expansion. Since the time of Voltaire, that is, since shortly before the French Revolution, writers and scholars, philosophers and poets, have voiced similar opinions, and all of them seem to agree that Europe has become too "narrow" for them, that a rejuvenation can only come from the East. Most of them stressed the need for a moral and intellectual re-awakening, only very few mentioned the political and economic interests involved.

The fact that preoccupations of a very material kind were involved throughout these 150 years, however, admits of no doubt. The coincidence of spiritual and material expansion is far too striking to be merely accidental. And if, as some say, cultural progress reflects, in more than one way, material progress, then we have here an admirable instance to the point. Historically speaking, the re-awakened interest in Indian civilization coincided with the economic and colonial expansion of those countries in Europe which required new markets for the products of their factories and workshops. The English were the first to begin a systematic study of Sanskrit and Indian civilization because they had very definite material interests in the East and were quite naturally led to an investigation into the language and philosophy of those people who had become both politically and economically their subjects. The first Sanskrit scholars and Indologists were either Government officials or Missionaries. The reason why France lagged behind is to be found in the fact that her interests were at that time already more confined to the Near East than to India. The country, therefore, in which the Industrial Revolution first originated, accelerating thereby the rise of the middle-classes, was also the first to investigate the civilization of India. For, on the one hand, the Industrial Revolution had opened up a new market in the East and, on the other, the middle classes were thirsty for a vaster and less limited kind of knowledge. They indeed revolted against the aristocratic culture of their predecessors, confined as it was to the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, and demanded fresh spiritual food. The middle classes stood for the expansion of the empire as well as for the expansion of their mind.

conversation in the fashionable drawing-rooms of Paris or London or New York. At best their books will be a literary success and might establish a new literary tradition. They will not lead to a new way of life or the creation of new patterns of thought, except in individual cases. The "growth of the spirit today" is the result of individual protest against existing modes of life. The Renaissance brought about by the "inheritance" of Asia is still in its childhood. Indeed we wonder whether it will ever grow to maturity.

In this book we shall limit ourselves to the response of Europeans to India during the last 150 years only. A more complete account could be given if we would also include the response of Indians to Europe during the same period of time. Such a study would reveal similar historical and social forces at work as in the West. For in India also it was the educated higher middle-class, those who were dissatisfied with the limitations of ancient learning and culture and who desired a broadening of their consciousness who most readily responded to the influence of the West. Here, as in Europe, it was a time of spiritual reawakening and material progress, of a new search for truth and the application of new values. And just as in the West, the "Renaissance" in India was also limited to an élite of poets, writers, and intellectuals of middle-class origin. The people remained, to a very considerable extent, unaffected. The main difference, however, between the response of the West to India and India's response to Europe, consists in the fact that the former were "free" to respond and did so out of an urgent inner need, while the latter were, first of all,—and almost certainly against their will—driven to acknowledge the superiority of a culture whose only claim to superiority—so, at least, it seemed to them—consisted in material efficiency and the large-scale manufacture of arms. It is indeed significant that, while many a great European considered the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha to be the very climax of human perfection in the realm of the spirit, only a small select group of Indians looked upon the Bible or Christianity with an equal enthusiasm. But, then, we must remember that neither the Upanishads nor Buddhism entered Europe in the wake of invading armies or colonial subjection. Indeed, European scholars and poets were "free" to admire where admiration was due. The admiration of the Indian intellectual, whenever it was ungrudgingly given, was due to an inherent generosity of heart and a willingness to understand, *despite* the loss of political or economic freedom. Such an intellectual freedom is, quite naturally, limited to the very few only, a Vivekananda, a Rabindranath, a Mahatma Gandhi.

FELLOW-PASSENGER

A SHORT STORY

By PRAMATHA CHAUDHURI

I MET SITIKANTHA SINGHA THAKUR in a railway-carriage. For about three hours only he was my fellow-passenger. But those three hours were so unprecedented in my life, that their memory even now is quite vivid. Sometimes I think I only imagined I met him, that I never really saw him and never talked to him. The whole affair was so strange, that my reason protests against my believing in its actual occurrence. It is said dreams sometimes come true. In this case perhaps the true has become a dream. Anyhow, now I'll tell you what happened.

Five or six years ago, one evening at about ten o'clock I received an express telegram from Jhajha, saying that a certain relative of mine was extremely ill and that if I wished to see him before his death it was necessary for me to set out that night. Without a moment's delay I rushed to Howrah station in a hackney-carriage. There I heard that a train which would take me to Jhajha, was leaving in about five minutes. The train was a slow-passenger and left at an unearthly hour, yet I found it altogether full. There was no room even to sit down comfortably, much less lie down. Only a first-class compartment was empty. So I bought a first-class ticket and got in.

At first I was alone in the compartment. Then at some station on the way, I don't remember which, an old Englishman came in and started talking to me at once. After speaking of one thing and another, he suddenly asked me whether the Kashai Kali of Bowbazar was a Bhadra Kali or Dakshina Kali. I replied I did not know. He was a little surprised to discover such ignorance in a Bengali Hindu. Later on he said he had formerly been an engineer in this country and was now doing research work on the Tantras in England. He had returned to Bengal recently, in order to study the various images of Kali. After that he expounded the greatness of the goddess to me the whole night long. I was in a most worried state of mind at the time, so though his words reached my ears, they did not sink into my brain. Otherwise I would have been able to write such a thesis on Kali, that the Calcutta University would have bestowed the title of Doctor on me in consequence. Noticing how absent-minded I was, he enquired the reason and I told him frankly. After closing his eyes in silence for a few moments, he said—"Your relative has recovered."

Late in the night I fell asleep. Awaking at dawn I found that the train had arrived at Asansol station, and my English companion had disappeared. Seeing the compartment empty, I wondered whether I had dreamt about the old gentleman. Unable to decide whether the events of the night were real or not, I got down and went into the Refreshment Room, to drive away the drowsiness from my eyes with the help of a cup of tea.

When I returned about ten minutes later, I found two new arrivals sitting in the compartment. One was a military man and the other a *sadhu*. From the appearance and dress of the *saheb* I gathered that he was either a Colonel or a Major, for the impress of his rank was stamped all over him. Upon my entering the compartment, he got up hastily and made sitting room for me. I thanked him and sat down ; but my eyes were held by that *sadhu*. The first thing that struck me about him was his size ; if not a great man, he was certainly a big one. Beside him the English Colonel looked a mere stripling. The Swami was as broad as he was tall. Judging by sight, I calculated that the width of his chest must be at least 48 in. Yet he was not stout. I had not the slightest doubt that such a figure belonged to a champion wrestler. But assuming he was a wrestler, there was no coarseness about his appearance. He was fair, that is to say the sort of colour that is made by mixing copper and silver, when the former is alloyed with the latter. His eyes were as blue and hard as turquoise. Such cruel eyes I had never beheld in a human face before. He was wearing a saffron turban and Peshawari slippers. I was somewhat taken aback at seeing him, for I did not know that Pathans became ascetics, and I took for granted that this man could be no other than a Pathan. There was an expression of calm intrepidity in his eyes and face, such as is seldom seen among either householders or ascetics in this country.

Seeing that I was staring open-mouthed at him, the *sadhu* said to me in Bengali :

“Sir, do you think I have got into this compartment by mistake—that I have taken first for third class ?—I am not so lost to all sense of responsibility. Here, look at my ticket.”

Ruffled by his remark, I said—“No, why should I think so ? Nowadays I see a good many *sadhus* travelling first-class. Why, some even have saloons to themselves.”

The reply to this was a loud laugh. Then he said, “That sir, is at somebody else’s expense. I sir, have no disciples who believe that by buying me a seat in the first-class they will secure a seat in heaven. God does not enjoin begging on all who don the saffron robe.”

"No, of course not."

"If it were possible to say what sort of a person one is from one's dress, you would have to be considered a *saheb*."

As I was wearing English clothes, I had to swallow the *sadhu's* gibe in silence.

After this he raised his face and gazed at the sky with eyes rapt in meditation. For some time he was absent-mindedly quiet. Then he scrutinized the Colonel attentively. Suddenly his eyes fell on the Colonel's cannon-like gun. Immediately he asked in English :

"May I have a look at your weapon, sir ?"

"Certainly, here it is," answered the Colonel and placed the gun in the *sadhu's* hands, who took it and said "Thank you."

"It's a Winchester repeater," he said, handling it.

"That's right."

"Splendid weapon—but no use for us shikaris."

"No, it's not a sporting gun."

"Would you care to have a look at my gun ?—I am sure you will like it." With this he pulled out a gun-case from beneath the seat and taking out a rifle, said—"Let me take out the balls." After removing two cartridges, he handed the gun to the Englishman. The *saheb* was absolutely charmed at the sight of it.

"It's a beauty," he said softly twice or thrice. Then he asked, "Did you get it in Calcutta ?"

"No, I brought it out from England."

"It must have cost a pot of money."

"Two hundred and fifty pounds."

The discussion that followed between the *saheb* and the Swami was unintelligible to me. I remember only one or two English words—such as twelve-bore, 454, Holland & Holland, etc. I surmised they were the names of things called guns, their varieties, habitat, qualities, etc. Then the *saheb* got down at Sitarampur station and shaking hands with the *sadhu* said,

"Well, good-bye, glad to have met you."

"Au revoir," answered the Swami.

All this time I had been listening with astonishment to the Swami's conversation and had gathered from it that he was a Bengalee, had been educated in English, that he was wealthy and a shikari. Such a person is not to be met with more than once in a lifetime.

Even more strange seemed to me his subsequent behaviour. Though

a *sadhu* he was not one inured to the sitting posture. Never have I seen a person of his age so restless. Every five minutes he would get up from one place to sit in another, muttering something to himself, and now and then pacing up and down the compartment. Whenever a train passed he would put his head out of the window, leaning so far that he almost tumbled out, and scrutinize the passengers in it with the greatest attention. We were speeding westward and the other trains were speeding eastward ; on the way they met for a second only. Under the circumstances, what a passenger in one train could notice about passengers in the other, I failed to understand. What I did understand however was that he was much more interested in the passengers of other trains than in those of his own ; because after Sitarampur he did not even look at me for a long time, much less speak. But he must have noticed that his behaviour surprised me, for suddenly he said :

“Perhaps you want to know what I am looking for in the trains that pass by ?—All right, I’ll tell you briefly. Listen.

“My name is Sitikantha Singha Thakur, by caste a Brahmin and by profession a zemindar. My father had a huge estate ; by right of inheritance I am now its owner. When father died I was still very much of a minor. So the Court of Wards took over the guardianship of the property and an Englishman became my tutor. He had been a captain once upon a time. I never went to school or college ; so whatever I learnt, I learnt from him. Do you know what he taught me ?—to ride, to shoot, and to speak English. In these three things I am perhaps—why perhaps ?—certainly supreme among the scions of Bengal zemindars. You have heard me speak English ? And what sort of a rider I am, the best horses in Bengal know. And I can lay a rhinoceros low with a single bullet from twenty-five feet. My aim is unerring. My second tutor was a Brahmin pundit. He taught me Sanskrit, ceremonial procedure, religious duties and the *mantras*. A zemindar’s son is supposed to need a sense of religious duty. So I became both an orthodox Hindu and an orthodox Englishman—Brahmin and Kshatriya in one.

“Then why this garb ?—I have donned the saffron robe not for want of gold, but for want of a woman. Perhaps you are wondering how it is that a scion of wealth should lack women ! But I sir, am not like the rest of them. Money puts one under no obligation to indulge in evil habits. Never in my life have I had a drop of liquor, nor smoked ; and until now I have never touched a woman other than my own wife. One after another, I married three times ; all three have passed away.

"My first marriage took place while I was still a minor, with a girl of equal status. That wife was what the daughters of big zemindars usually are. What she had was breeding, virtue and manners : what she lacked was beauty and brains....

"The second, whom I chose for myself, was a commoner's daughter. She was as intelligent as she was beautiful—just what people describe as being beautiful as Lakshmi and clever as Saraswati. Leaving all the work of the zemindari to her, I spent my time in shooting. One such girl may be found in a hundred thousand perhaps, in Bengal. In beauty many may compare with her, but in brains none."

"After her death I married again—within a month of my bereavement. It is this third wife who has put me into this garb. But don't you imagine that she is enjoying my property as a widow, and that I am wandering about morning noon and night crying—'O Lord, give me a seer of flour and half a seer of ghee !' When I was a small boy I heard a song that ran—

*Alas, alas ! it makes me laugh to hear
Krishna will go to Kashi
Smearing himself with ashes—**

"I also am not the man to go to Benares, even though I have taken to the loin-cloth and *kamandalu*.† My third wife has fled the country, so I too have forsaken it. That sounds rather contemptible, doesn't it ? I'll tell you what it is all about. You may believe it or not, as you please. I don't care a rap for other people's opinions.

"In the inner garden of our house there is a big pond—for the women to bathe in. A few months after our marriage, my third wife went to bathe there one evening and was drowned. I was not at home at the time, having gone elephant-hunting in Assam. It took almost seven days for the news of my wife's death to reach me. On coming back I found her gone—but whether to the land of the living or the dead, I could not be sure. I'll tell you the reasons for my doubts.

"She was the daughter of very poor parents—but extraordinarily beautiful ; an angel strayed from heaven to earth by mistake. For want of money, her father was unable to arrange her marriage for a long time. When I proposed marriage, she was eighteen. To my surprise, her father did not give his consent at first. The beggar maiden going to become

* A sarcastic song, meaning it is incredible that Krishna should go to Benares made up as an ascetic.

† A special water-gourd used by sadhus.

a queen, and fancy the father objecting ! My people are not accustomed to be so treated. I sent word to that wretched Brahmin that if he did not consent to give his daughter to me in marriage, I would take her away by force and send elephants to trample down his hut and have it thrown into the river. So he brought the girl and gave her to me out of fright. Before two days had passed, I heard a rumour that it was not the father who had objected to the marriage, but the daughter. It seems there had been a proposal for her marriage with one of my young clerks, and she had vowed she would wed none other. The fellow came from her village, was handsome and a good musician. Moreover, I had known him to be of good character hitherto. Of course no sooner did I hear this rumour than I sent the chap away. Some days later my wife was drowned. So a doubt remained in my mind that perhaps she had not died but run away. What sort of a girl she was I cannot say ; for I had not become well acquainted with her after marriage. She was made of lightning and I feared to touch her, as I did not know how to tame lightning. A very precious jewel reposing in its casket, suddenly one day disappeared. My character has deteriorated rapidly since then. Oh, how beautiful she was ! But my rage at losing her exceeded my sorrow. She did not know that even an angel from heaven dare not tread on the tail of a cobra on earth."

"Then you adopted the saffron robe because you were fed up with the world ?" I asked.

"Being fed up with the world," he answered, "is no reason for committing suicide. There are lots of bears and tigers sitting round in hopes of getting shot,—why should I deprive them of a bullet by shooting myself ?—Apart from that I could easily have married a fourth time, after the passing of my third. My relatives were searching the country for a suitable girl. I am childless, so our line must be preserved. But about this time something happened, which made a fourth marriage out of the question.

"I was going to Calcutta. A train was standing at Ranaghat station ; as ours pulled up, it moved away. I saw my virtuous clerk sitting in a third-class compartment with an extraordinarily beautiful young woman by his side. It didn't take me long to recognise that the young woman was my third wife, even though I could not see her face well. There is such a thing as instinct. Since that day I do nothing but travel about in trains,—some day I'll catch them and this game of hide-and-seek will end. The object of my wearing saffron is that they may not recognise me. And do

you know why I carry this gun ?—The day I see those two again, I will leave two bullets in their two chests. The person has not yet been born, who can steal my wife and go about hale and happy. Afterwards (this he added in Sanskrit)—There is, to the north, a godly king of mountains named the Himalayas. I shall take refuge in its lap.”

Scarcely had he spoken, than the train pulled up at Deoghar station. Another train sped past at top speed. Sitikantha Singha Thakur put his head out of the window and exclaimed,—“There they go, in that train !” He grasped his gun and leapt nimbly down to the platform. Then he pulled both triggers. Twice there was only the sound of a click. He had forgotten there were no cartridges in the gun. He took them out of his breast-pocket and thrust them into the weapon. In the meantime the other train had passed out of sight. Our train also began to move. Sitikantha remained standing on the platform of Deoghar station, gun in hand.

I have never seen Sitikantha since, either in my own or in a passing train. I can only wonder where he is now,—in the Himalayas, or on the scashore, in gaol or in an asylum ?

Translated by Lila Ray.



SPRING IN CASHMERE

SAROJINI NAIDU

O SPRING how you grieve me !
Would you deceive me with praise of your fragile
Miraculous art ?
Where did you copy
Your tulip and poppy if not from the red-flowering
Wounds in my heart ?

Who set the sweet fashion
Of lyrical passion and taught your winged songsters
Their trebles and trills
Of high haunting beauty ?
Who trained to the duty of laughing adventure
Your rivers and rills ?

Who lent the bright cluster
Of Pleiades their lustre, the hills their soft hue
Like wild lilac in bloom ?
Are you beholden
To none for the golden rich pattern that jewels
The wood pheasant's plume ?

O Spring I have caught you !
Who would have thought you a traitor denying
My script and my scroll,
Whereby you moulded
And subtly enfolded your world in the dyes
And the dreams of my soul ?

A SIDELIGHT ON INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

By N. C. GHOSH

MYTHS and legends of all races at all times afford a fascinating study, giving as they do, a picture of the workings of the mind of a race or a civilisation as it emerges out of prehistory. The myths and legends of India, this land of most ancient memories, survive to us in the rich and abundant store-house of Sanskrit literature and with the rise and growth of Brahminism, Buddhism and Jainism.

The first big fact known in the history of this country is that nearly 5000 years ago, that is to say, between 2500 B. C. to 3000 B. C. an orderly and well-established civilisation existed in the Indus plain, a civilisation closely akin but in many respects superior to the contemporary civilisation in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Our knowledge of this fact is fairly recent. Scholars in the past guessed at something of the sort, but the guesses have become facts only as the result of exploration carried out since the year 1921 at Mohenjo-daro, more than 200 miles north of the mouth of the Indus and at Harappa about 100 miles to the south-west of Lahore.

The next big fact is the advent of the Aryans into this land. No archaeological data so far exist of the early settlement of the Aryans and our knowledge about these early settlers of Hindusthan is primarily derived from the four books of the Vedas which are at least three to four thousand years old.

Indian Mythology may be divided very roughly into two specific periods, those appertaining to the Vedic age and those of the Puranic age which followed the former. One significant feature about Indian Mythology is that it does not consist of just myths which are relegated to a dim past. The ancient invocatory hymns of the four Vedas, the later speculative and expository Aranyakas and Upanishadas in which the Absolute is grasped and proclaimed, and those great epic poems of the Ramayana which is three times longer than the Iliad and the Mahabharata which is four times longer than the Ramayana are still influencing the life and thought of three hundred millions of Hindus in this land of the Bharatas.

The development that is clearly traceable from the simple yet beautiful hymns of the Vedas, with its symbolic teaching, to great and ennobling ideas which have exercised a culturing influence in India through many long centuries and are still potent factors in the domestic, social and religious life of many millions of Hindus, is of abiding interest. Herein lies the unique character of Indian Mythology which is quite different from anything else on this line of thought in other parts of the globe. The word Mythology does not really apply to this wonderful storehouse of

the sublimest thoughts that have ever been put in language. It is an entire culture, not just myths and legends.

To understand aright the traditional views of the Vedas, a very ancient world view which forms the permanent strand of all traditional views has to be comprehended properly. According to that world view, this scheme of things that we behold has both as a whole and in its elements and principles three aspects—the physical or the “Adhibhautika”, the cosmic divine or the “Adhidaivika” and the spiritual or the “Adhyatmika”. The Vedic Rishis approached and adored the Gods in these three aspects and for any appreciation of the Vedic Deities it is essential to remember this view point.

Western scholarship has not always been able to grasp these three aspects and apply them towards a correct appreciation of the inner symbolism of the Vedic Deities.

The beautiful legends connected with the Vedic Deities are far too numerous to receive even cursory treatment, within the narrow compass of this review ; I can but make brief references to some of them.

INDRA, King of the Gods, is depicted as waging many a war. One of his combats is with the Drought Demons. It is clearly a reflection of the natural phenomena of Hindusthan.

The hot Indian summer draws to a close, the whole land is parched and athirst for rain ; rivers are low and many hill streams have dried up ; man and beast are weary and await release in the breathless enervating atmosphere. Then dense masses of cloud gather in the sky ; the tempest bellows ; lightnings flash and thunder peals angrily and loud ; rain descends in a deluge ; once again torrents pour down from the hills and rivers become swollen and turgid ; Indra has successfully waged war against the Drought Demons, broken down their fortress walls, and released the imprisoned cow-clouds which give nourishment to his human friends. Withered pasture becomes green with generous and rapid growth, and the harvest follows. Mankind entreated the aid of Indra, the shining one, and their wish is fulfilled. In the hymn the spiritual and the eternal transcends the physical :

Who will take pity ? Who will bring refreshment ?

Who will come nigh to help us in distress ?

Counsels the thoughts within our hearts are counselling,

Wishes are wished and soar towards the highest,

O none but them, the shining ones, are merciful,

As longing wings itself towards the eternal.

In all these invocatory hymns, the Eternal and the Absolute is hardly ever forgotten and in all the diversity the One is proclaimed again and again.

AGNI, the other great Deity who figures high in Vedic literature is the Fire God. It is true he is worshipped as the altar fire and is even produced, for the purpose of the ritual, by some sort of a fire drill. But this fire is the priest himself, he who takes man's worship and consecrated action unto himself and leads them to their destination. He is "the immortal in mortals", he is born in that which is the very foundation of man. He is the Seer Will. He is the eye that guides the man. He is the divine worker in man and Man's messenger to the Gods.

VARUNA, who symbolised the investing sky, the all-enveloping one, claims our attention next. The hymns impart to him a character of supreme grandeur. He was the sustainer of the Universe, the law giver, the God of moral rectitude, the sublime sovereign of gods and men.

A VEDIC triad which suggests a rival cult to that of the worshippers of VARUNA and other Adityas is formed by VAYU (Wind), AGNI (Fire), SURYA (The Sun).

SURYA is an Aryanised Sun God, who drives a golden chariot drawn by seven mares. He stimulates all life and the minds of men. One of the most sacred and oldest Mantras in Vedas is still addressed by Brahmins to the rising Sun. It runs :

*Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the Divine Vivifier,
May he enlighten our understanding.*

The Rishis of the Vedic age looked upon nature with poet's eye. They symbolised everything, but they revelled also in the gorgeous beauty of the dawn and the evening, the luxuriance of the Indian trees and flowers, the serene majesty of the Himalayan Mountains, the cascades, the rivers and the shining lakes. The wonder and mystery of the world inspired their hymns and their religion.

The effulgence and silence of the dawn inspired some of the most beautiful Vedic hymns. Dawn is USHA—the Indian Aurora and she is invoked thus :—

*Hail, ruddy Usha, golden goddess, borne
Upon thy shining car, thou comest like
A lovely maiden by her mother decked
Disclosing coyly all thy hidden graces
To our admiring eyes, or like a wife
Unveiling to her lord, with conscious pride,*

*Beauties which, as he gazes lovingly,
Seem fresher, fairer, each succeeding morn,
Though years and years thou hast lived on, and yet
Thou art ever young. Thou art the breath of life
Of all that breathes and lives, awaking day by day,
Myriads of prostrate sleepers, as from death
Causing the birds to flutter from their nests,
And rousing men to ply with busy feet,
Their daily duties and appointed tasks
Toiling for wealth, or pleasure or renown.*

YAMA, the King of the Dead, is yet another of the Vedic Deities centred round whose figure charming and inspiring legends are narrated, with which even today the children of a Hindu household are familiar.

The rituals and *Yajnas* or sacrifices form a very big part in Vedic literature. The whole setting of Vedic sacrifices or *Yajnas* is so devised as to carry a spiritual and psychological significance. The Veda itself quite often gives the clue to the spiritual significance of its figures and symbols, myths and legends. "When they say He is come out of the horse," says a Vedic Seer, "I understand Him to be born out of the luminous energy ; He is come out of the mind's force."

Later developments carry us through a mass of most fascinating legends and we come across various creation myths. The most elaborate story of Creation is found in the Laws of Manu, the ancestor of mankind and the first law giver.

It relates that in the beginning, the Self-existent Being desired to create living creatures. He first created the Water, which he called "Narrah" and then a seed ; he flung the seed into the water and it became a golden egg which had the splendour of the sun. From the egg came forth BRAHMA, Father of all. Because BRAHMA came from the "Waters" and they were his first home—"ayana", he is called "Narayana."

Further developments carry us to the great Upanishadas wherein the BRAHMA, the Absolute, is proclaimed. The proclamation goes forth :

Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma.

"The Brahma permeates everything. He is all-in-all." "The real is one—sages call it variously"—"Change is only a matter of words ; the one abides."

These are but a few eternal spiritual truths which find expression in no uncertain language in the Upanishadas.

The great prayer—the greatest perhaps that humanity has ever expressed—might also be instanced in this connection—

*Asato Ma Sat Gamaya
Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya
Mrityur Ma-mritam Gamaya.*

Lead thou me from untruth to truth,
From darkness unto light,
From death to immortality.

Next we come to the Puranic legends—The great epics of India—the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The Mahabharata which consists of 90,000 couplets is the longest poem in the world. It is really an enormous poetical treasury in which everything was thrown that could possibly be brought into connection with its original story of the great war waged in ancient times in India. Ethics, philosophy, customs, rules about caste, marriage and inheritance, all come under the shield of this ancient epic. The geography, the ethnology, the migration of races in India can also be studied in the Mahabharata.

Endless legends of surpassing fascination find place in this great epic and these indicate how in the Puranic times the worship of goddesses somewhat supplanted the earlier worship of male deities. Usha, the dawn, and Ratri, the night, were mainly poetic conceptions in the Vedic age. In Puranic times, we find Saraswati, the wife of Brahma, as the Minerva of the Hindu Pantheon. She is identical with Vach, the mother of the Vedas, the goddess of poetry and eloquence.

Lakshmi or Sri, who had her origin at the churning of the ocean, became the wife of Vishnu and the goddess of beauty, love and prosperity. She has had several human incarnations and in each case was loved by the incarnation of Vishnu. She is Sita in the Ramayana, and the beautiful herdsman Radha beloved of Krishna in the Mahabharata. Lakshmi is "the world mother," eternal, imperishable; as Vishnu is all pervading. She is omnipresent. Vishnu is meaning; she is speech; Vishnu is righteousness; she is devotion; Sri is the earth and Vishnu is the support of the earth.

The Ramayana is still a living tradition and a living faith. It forms the basis of the moral instructions of a nation and it is part of the lives of three hundred millions of people.

When the modern languages of India were first formed out of the ancient Sanskrit and Prakrita, in the ninth and tenth centuries, Ramayana

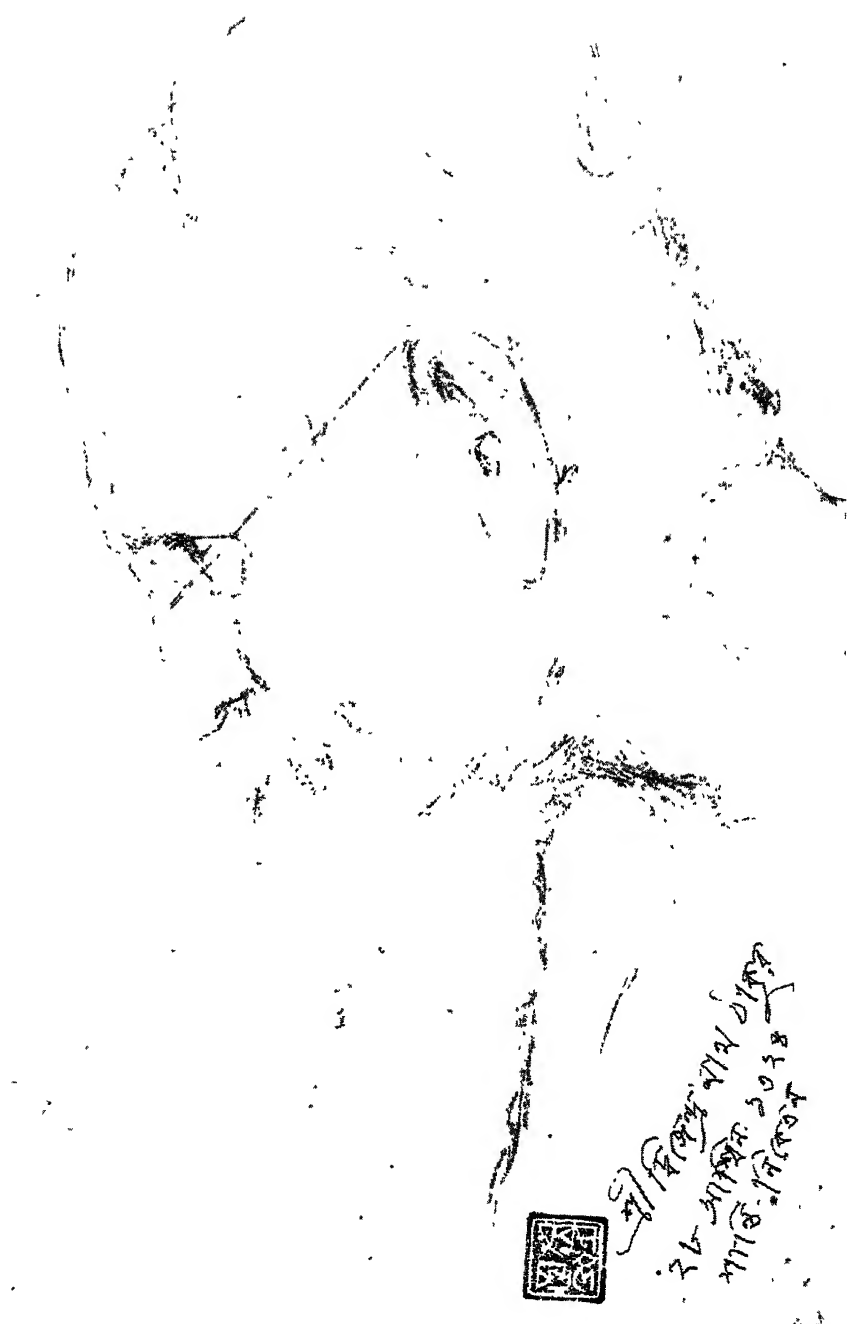
had the greatest influence in inspiring our modern poets and forming our modern tongues.

More than this, the story of Rama has inspired our religious reformers and purified the popular faith of our modern times. Reformers in medieval India, all preached the same sublime monotheism based on either the Krishna Cult or the Rama Cult. Down to the present day the popular mind in India, led away by the worship of many images in many temples, nevertheless holds fast to the cardinal idea of One God and believes in the heroes of the ancient epics—Krishna and Rama—to be incarnations of God.

The myths and legends of India, unlike those in other lands, are still the fountain of living faiths. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." The divinity which has allowed the preservation of this store house of spiritual thought in India may have a purpose behind and India may yet have a message for this world in travail today. The devastating war that is waging today to make the world safe for democracy may with India's thought-contribution be made safe, not only for democracy, but for the universal reign of reverence, goodwill and compassion, so that races and cultures will respect each other's worth, and religions will cherish each other's sanctity, and individuals will learn that "God Almighty has but one great family, in which the denizens of every kingdom of nature are His beloved children." Thus tyrannies, injustices, oppressions, exploitations and maldistribution between one race and another, one nation and another, one faith and another, shall be things of the past. May I conclude by invoking India's part in it in the words of our great poet Rabindranath :

"In that full blown dawn (sure to grow into glorious day),
O Bharat, stay thou awake amidst thy sufferings, with a
simple pure heart, keeping thy soul free from all fetters,
decorating thy inner shrine of greatness with sweet and
scented flowers, and sandal paste, laying thy grief-bowed head
ever on His feet—in silence."





श्री विष्णु भगवत्
३८ अक्षर
मार्ग २०३४
१९८४

Dwijendranath Tagore

By Mukul Dey

IN MEMORIAM DWIJENDRANATH TAGORE

(b. 1840—d. Jan. 1926)

By INDIRA DEVI CHAUDHURI

REVERED Dwijendranath was Bordada or Big Brother to all his intimates and associates, even to Mahatma Gandhi whom he deeply admired, and to Rev. Andrews who dearly loved him ; and Big Uncle to us, his nephews and nieces, of whom I am one.

He was the eldest and my father Satyendranath the second of a large family of brothers and sisters, children of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore—of whom Rabindranath was the youngest and greatest. There is a saying amongst us that consecutive children are apt to fall out, but these two brothers were great friends from first to last. I still remember how my father insisted on coming to Santiniketan just before his last illness, even when he was ailing, as if to bid farewell to his dear Bordada.

And yet the two were more unlike than like in most things. Physically my uncle was a tall and big-made man, my father comparatively short and of slighter build than the other brothers. Then again Dwijendranath was conservative and what is now-a-days called *swadeshi* in spirit ; whilst nothing gave Satyendranath greater pleasure than to see social restrictions for women and barriers like the purdah being broken down ;—also he was partial to things European. But probably brotherly love and childhood's associations are too deep-seated to be disrupted by intellectual differences of opinion. And there was always the underlying basis of literature and music to unify the family members.

I am not competent to judge of my uncle's contributions to philosophical literature in Bengali, though I believe they are much appreciated by his countrymen. But as a poet, his originality of diction and command over rhythm still win the unstinted admiration of competent critics. Speaking for myself, I think the opening lines of his famous *Swapnaprayāna* or Dream-Journey are amongst the finest in Bengali poetry—

স্থপ্তিতে ডুবিয়া গেল জাগরণ—

সাগরসীমায় যথা অস্ত যায় জলন্ত তপন ।

Of course my knowledge of Bengali literature is mostly confined to home-made stuff,—the “stuff that dreams are made on.” But to my mind, the second line with its combination of alliteration and falling cadence expresses to perfection the sense of the sun sinking, sinking, sinking in slow successive drops down to the sea-line on the horizon ; being also the perfect

counterpart and simile of the gradual falling, falling, falling of the conscious self into the oblivion of deep sleep, as expressed in the first line.

Dwijendranath's humour is also altogether unique, and also largely dependent on his inimitable choice of unexpected words and mastery over rhyme and rhythm. An outstanding example of this are his well-known (if not, then ought-to-be) extremely witty verses on the neo-Bengali youth itching to become a full-fledged sahib ;—Ingo-Bongo being the name he coined for the species,—a name which has still stuck. Its Sanskrit metrical form is its chief claim to originality.

Another compact illustration of his verbal and metrical dexterity is his rendering into Bengali verse of the Brahmo Dharma Grantha or religious prayer-book of the Adi Brahma Samaj. Only those who know the original, can appreciate the full value of the literary power required to convert the difficult Sanskrit texts of the Upanishads into Bengali verse almost easy enough for a child to read and understand.

But it is not possible to give an adequate idea of his writings within this small compass. So I would refer those who are curious or interested to his collected works in three volumes published by his talented grandson, the late Dinendranath Tagore.

My Big Uncle was as original physically as he was mentally. Many are the stories told of his amazing physical feats, such as insisting on taking his accustomed daily bath even though running a temperature of 104°, to the despair of his attending relatives ; and coming out of it unscathed, to the discomfiture of his attending doctors. We ourselves have seen him go on with his beloved writing, writing, writing, even though all his fingers were bent with rheumatism : and can also conjure up a mental picture of him striding along the beach at Puri,—equally oblivious of the blistering hot sands beneath his feet and the burning hot sun above his head ;—whilst his much younger but much more delicate nephews lagged laboriously behind him, a long way after. A funny incident also occurs to mind of a tailor being nonplussed by an order given him by my uncle during his stay with us in Satara, (my father's last and probably best station in the Bombay Presidency,)—to make a pair of flannel stockings for his rheumatic legs, which were a cross between stockings and leggings and Bhutia boots and heaven knows what else besides !—showing that he was as original in sartorial as in other matters. Which reminds me, he used to wear one *jibhab* in front and another behind, as an easy substitute for the conventional buttoned-up *achkan* and *jibhab* of those days. His predilection for feeding birds and squirrels, and how they

used to roam at their own sweet will over his head and body, are too well-known to need repetition—at least in his favourite abode of Santiniketan, where the house known as *Nichu Bangla* still recalls old memories and bears witness to the sage-like tenant who lived the latter part of his life and died there at the age of about 85. He used to say he would attain the age of his revered father the Maharshi, but actually fell short of it by two or three years. They are or rather were a long-lived family ; and it is a thousand pities that the following generations are not keeping up to the mark.

He often used to regret in mature age that he had failed to come up to his father's expectations in the matter of looking after the family property, and must have caused him pain. But he was cast in a totally different mould, living literally in the world but not of it. For all the interest he took in worldly affairs, he might as well not have undertaken the duties and responsibilities of a father and householder and head of a large and wealthy family.

Making paper-boxes was one of his hobbies ; not only boxes big and small with all sorts of compartments, but note-books and various other contrivances which required the utmost skill and ingenuity. But *a cui bono* ?—They have all been relegated to the limbo of waste-paper, or become food for insects ; and I doubt whether there is a single complete sample extant. Whereas if he had made them of some stronger material, such as leather or canvas or oil-cloth, as I once suggested,—they might have withstood the ravages of time, and even had a marketable value. But what did he care ?—He did things for pleasure, not for profit ; for the present, not for the future ; for *Karma*, not for the fruits thereof, as enjoined in the Gita. It was the same with regard to another hobby of his,—equally fascinating and equally futile—his system of Bengali shorthand (perhaps the first of its kind ?), which might have become a practical proposition if he had had an eye to business ; but which, as a matter of fact, survives only to furnish one more proof, if proof were needed, of his wonderful knack of wielding and welding words and metre into examples of the different Bengali letter-sounds. Even his own compositions, so dear to the heart of every writer, had no lasting use for him, and served only as fleeting fancies to be discarded after having been expressed and enjoyed by his intimate circle of listeners, amongst whom he included even the old nurse of the family, who bowed down to the ground after the reading of the *Dream-Journey* was over, thinking it to be a hymn to the gods,—so runs the tale.

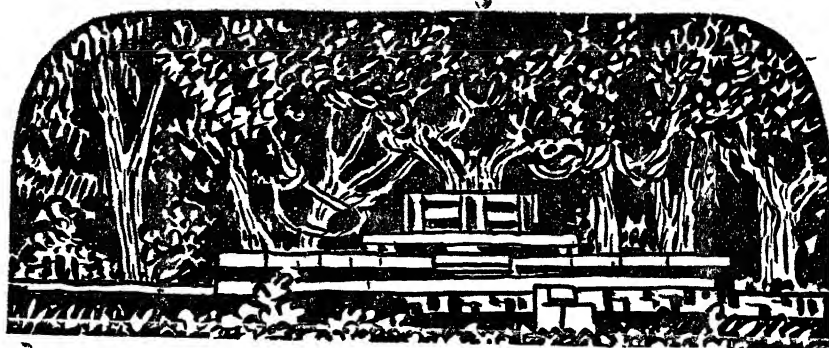
Those who were his childhood's companions, have testified to his love of music and fondness for playing the flute. But these and many

other such biographical details must necessarily be omitted from a mere outline sketch like this, which only purports to be a slight record of personal impressions culled haphazard from memory. I would again refer those who are desirous of knowing a little more about Dwijendranath, to the special number of the *Bharati* published soon after his death in Jan. 1926, which contains short but illuminating memoirs from his relatives and friends.

His boisterous laugh,—frank, simple and spontaneous,—will be remembered by all who have come into contact with him. Which all goes to show that this hoary-headed *savant* was at bottom a child,—a child in his love of animals, his innocence of worldly affairs, his dependence on others in practical matters, his irrepressible vitality, his sense of fun and frolic; and at the same time a wise man in his kindliness of spirit, his intercourse with the other world, his devotion to God, his philosophical perception and literary power.

He was a man, take him for all in all,

I shall not look upon his like again.



TO THE WEST

By BUDDHADEVA BOSE

ONCE, O West, we held you golden, glorious beyond compare.
You were the charioteer of Truth, releasing its force in distant lands.
You were the voice of Liberty : your call, vibrant, electric, went
 round the world, rousing the insensate.
Suddenly on the sleep-laden Ganges' banks, in a riotous tumult of
 life, you let loose the frenzy of the French Revolution.
We, on that day, drank deep in the passion of your poetry ;
We sang hymns of praise to your world-conquering Science.
It was our large-souled men, our own Rammohun and Vidyasagar
 who threw open our gates to your torrent ;
The wild salt of your seas rushed into the mild Hindu blood ;
Our hearts went out to greet your messengers, the good David Hare,
 the magnetic Derozio,
Life called unto life, and in that joyous giving and taking
 Bengal's tremulous soul caught the fiery infection.
On that day, O West, our enchanted eyes had seen only the blaze of
 your light ;
We had not seen the cruel coils of your greed, sucking the world's
 life-blood ;
We refused to look behind the scene of your dazzling achievements,
 where your arrogant armies revelled in murder ;
And the alchemy of your commerce turned human gore to gold ;
And cannons, camouflaged by the sacred word of Christ, wiped off
 old races in new continents ;
And the canker of slave-trade ate into the roots of your life-tree ;
And dark, vast Africa lay bleeding, her entrails torn.
We saw not these : and even before the wonder of that splendid
 dawn had died out,
We saw your flowers festering with Macaulay's lies,
And even then we deemed you fair, lovely as Elysium's dream,
Even then, O West, we strove and prayed for your victory.

II

Today your gorgeous apparel is torn to tatters, and you stand before
the world's eye, naked, shameless, bankrupt.

We can see your crooked claws and savage teeth.

Too soon is shed the body of your godly youth,

And now you are neither young nor old,

For your passion is spent, yet lust is strong.

In vain you are whipping yourself to call back the life-force you
have lost for ever.

The terrible torment of your flesh is tearing towns and hamlets,

Turning fields to fens, winds to witches, the month of May to a
monster.

The temples you once raised to the God in Man are today the seats
of the Golden Bull.

Your deadly disease no longer is hidden ;

It has spread in hideous sores all over the world :

In Abyssinia, Spain, China ; in the double knife plunged into
Poland's throat ;

In the hungry people and pampered prisons of India ; in the stifled
voices of noble souls.

We doubt it not, O West, that the Master of Eternity will soon
reject you,

Even as the drunkard throws away his cup after the night of carouse
is over.

Go your skeleton's way, till then,

Strike terror, spread war-fire, hurl destruction,

More and more enmeshed in your own sin,

Gathering curses from near and far.

Meanwhile they wake, those whom your rapacious wheels had
crushed to dust, your power had held in bondage and your
pride trodden under feet ;

Today the call has come to them,

They are the weapon in the hand of God ;

Your sentries cannot resist this resurrection.

If, at the end of the day, the repugnance of the oppressed had been
your sole meed,

Even that would have granted you some grace,

Some little light in your sulphurous fumes.

But those who are your best, your very own,
Pure in soul and free in spirit,
Your signature on the walls of Time,
Your inner signal flashing to all countries, all centuries,
Their voices rise in thunderous revolt,
Bitterly, O West, they cry out your shame,
For your insane hate is bent upon slaughtering the very god that
even now is wakeful in your heart,
And this, after a thousand sorrows, is still the hardest to bear.

Translated by the author from one of his recent Bengali poems.

WHO KNOWS ?

G. SOUNDARARAJ

Who knows how many reeds have been filled this very hour
And are pouring forth, enraptured, rich melodies ?
How many wonderful buds have opened in hedges and byways
Kissed by the warm rays of the radiant sun ?
How many stars have come out tearing apart dark clouds,
To lighten the path of weary pilgrims ?
How many oysters with hardened shells of defeat and despair
Have secreted away their lustrous pearls
Unable to stand life's threatening storms,
And shyly seeking refuge here and there,
Have plunged deeper into misery's loam ?
Who knows alas ! how many lamps have been smothered
By fierce gusts of pain and sorrow, poverty and starvation,
Or shattered to pieces and scattered in the dust,
By the pitiless, all-claiming lover, Death ?

DROP AND MAIN

G. SOUNDARARAJ

I AM but a drop of water, formless and flimsy.
You, my Lord, are the shoreless ocean.
The cradled stars clustering above
Are rocked on thy billowy bosom.
When thy storm-stored bosom heaves,
Deadly waves surmount thy flowing locks,
Hiss, drunkenly reel, and sink back to rest,
As a cobra whose fury is spent,
Having shattered to pieces titanic ocean-ploughers in their pride ;
But frail barks happily glide over thy glossy hide,
And with sails swollen by thy breath
Are safely guided to the haven of bliss.
Ever and anon swells the billowy brine
In its endless quest to win me back ;
And who can discern in me—a tiny particle—
Aught of thee, when I am not part of thee ?
But when I have found my way to thee,
And the little drop has dropped into the blue main
And freely mingled with thee,
Who could know the difference between the drop and the ocean ?
O, then shall I merrily dance and gaily sparkle
In the hallowed light of heaven silvering thy features,
And join the waves in their tireless quest
To win back stray drops lost like me ;
Or calm-faced repose on thy unruffled bosom
And though dead to all the world
Shall live in thee and be eternally one with thee.



RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND SOVIET RUSSIA

By K. R. KRIPALANI

ONE of the most remarkable things about Rabindranath Tagore was that as he grew older he became more progressive and radical in his outlook. Men ordinarily tend to become conservative with age; Tagore grew more revolutionary. Nothing testifies more vividly to this amazing intellectual and spiritual vitality of his than his outspoken reactions to the Soviet Experiment during his visit to Russia in 1930. That the author of *Gitanjali* and the great exponent of India's spiritual heritage looked upon his visit to the land of the Soviets as a pilgrimage is a proof, if one were needed, that this modern Rishi loved truth more than religion and cared for human welfare more than for any philosophical dogma. "If I had not come to Russia," he wrote in a letter, "life's pilgrimage would have remained incomplete. Before judging the good and bad of their activities here the first thing that strikes me is : What incredible courage ! What is called tradition clings to man in a thousand different ways : its numerous apartments, its innumerable doors are guarded by sentries whose number is legion ; its treasury rises mountain high, filled with taxes gathered over the centuries. Here in Russia they have torn it up by its roots ; there is no fear, no hesitation in their minds. . . . The cry of the Russian Revolution is also the cry of the world. At least this nation, of all the others in the world today, is thinking of the interest of the whole humanity, over and above the national interest."

Though it is doubtful if Stalin's Russia deserves the last great compliment, the fact remains that the poet trusted the communist claim and valued it so highly that he overcame many a hurdle of life-long beliefs in one outburst of admiration. Instead of being frightened at the violent and ruthless uprooting of Tradition, he is overjoyed. The internationalist in him is pleased that the curtain has gone up on the stage of world history in this age. He is glad of his visit, for "it would have been unpardonable not to see the light of the greatest sacrificial fire ever known in history." Once he had been greatly moved by the words of a Korean youth that the strength of Korea was the strength of her sorrow. It was the great miracle of sorrow's strength that drew him to Russia. He had heard many contradictory reports about Russia. He had read of the pitiless violence of the Bolsheviks. Many friends had tried to frighten him away from Russia by painting lurid pictures of the lack of civilized comforts and conveniences in that land. He was warned that he would not be able to stand the coarse food and the crude ways of the Bolsheviks.

and that in any case whatever he would be shown would be mere window-dressing. The poet even wondered if it was not too hazardous an undertaking on his part to visit Russia with such poor health and in his old age. But "the words of the Korean youth were ringing in my ears. I was thinking within myself that in the very courtyard of Western civilization, so triumphant in the power of wealth, Russia has raised the seat of power of the dispossessed, totally ignoring the frowns and curses of the entire Western world. If I do not go to see such a sight, who will? They are striving to destroy the power of the powerful and the wealth of the wealthy. Why should we be afraid of that? And why should we be angry? We have neither power nor wealth. We belong to the hungry and the helpless underdog class of the world."

These are the words of a poet who has been variously maligned in the West as a pseudo-mystic, a messenger of the sleepy Orient, a dreamer of hollow unreal dreams, a preacher of inaction, whose poetry to the "vital" mind of the European readers seemed "cold, abstract, bloodless," whose words "lacked substance" and "contained too much that is remote from actual human issues". How many European writers have written of the oppressed people of India with the sympathy and passion as this Indian wrote of the oppressed peoples all over the globe? The Nazi rape of Czechoslovakia provoked a magnificent poem from his pen. Has the ruthless British suppression of the voice of freedom in India since August 1942 inspired a single great poet of the West?

Rabindranath Tagore was not a communist, not even a socialist. Marxism or the philosophy of dialectic materialism was repugnant to his mental make-up which sought for harmony and co-operation rather than contradiction and conflict in the process of history. His faith in the validity of individual conscience and in the "infinite personality of man" biased him against any technique of political action aimed at the exploitation of the herd psychology of the masses with a view to a wholesale violent suppression of the opposition. He had a horror of the machine dominating the man, and knew that the party-machine did it more effectively than any other kind. He believed that inhumane means were capable of perverting the most humane ends.

These were virtues of his faith rather than its failings. Where he might seem to fail as a political thinker was that he understood but insufficiently, or perhaps did not care to understand sufficiently, the influence of property-relations on the basic structure of society, the industrial basis of the modern capitalist state, the prime necessity of centralised

organisation and control of the productive forces in a society if the distribution of wealth is to be equitable and just. But the poet never claimed to be a political philosopher. He was, as Gandhiji had once called him, a "great sentinel" of the rights of man. He upheld the right of every individual, white, brown or black, to health, livelihood, education and freedom, which alone can guarantee him a fair scope for the development of his personality. If any social or political system, however sacrosanct, stood in the way of this development, he was impatient of it and willing to have it scrapped. And so when he went to Russia he could not help but admire the great accomplishment of the Revolution in raising the underdog to the status of human beings. "Wherever I look I see no one else but workers The question to ask here is : Where are the so-called gentlemen ? The masses of Russia live no more in the dark shadows of the so-called gentlemen. Those that were hidden behind the curtain are now fully in the forefront of society. . . . Just within a few short years the ignorant masses have become full-fledged human beings. I cannot help thinking of the farmers and the workers of my own country. It seems that the magicians of the Arabian Nights have been at work in Russia. Only a decade ago the masses in Russia were as illiterate, helpless and hungry as our own masses ; equally blindly religious, equally stupidly superstitious. In sorrow and in danger they were wont to supplicate before their saints in the churches ; in fear of the other world their mind was mortgaged to the priests, and in fear of this world to their rulers, money-lenders and their landlords. Their duty was to polish the very boots with which they were kicked by their masters. They knew no change in their way of life for a thousand years. They had the same old carts, the same old spinning wheels, the same old oil presses. Any suggestion of change provoked them to revolt. As in the case of our three hundred millions, the ghost of time sat on their backs and blindfolded them from behind. Who could be more astonished than an unfortunate Indian like myself to see how in these few years they had removed the mountain of ignorance and helplessness ? And yet during those years of great changes, Russia knew nothing of the much vaunted 'Law and Order' as it prevails in our country."

Education and regeneration of the neglected voiceless masses of India had been a mission very dear to the poet's heart all through his life. As early as 1894 he had written the immortal, unforgettable lines :

To the dumb, languishing and the stupefied
must we give voice ;

These hearts, wilted, withered and broken,
 must be galvanised with new hope ;
 Beckoning them we must exhort :
 Lift up your heads this very instant
 and stand united.
 They before whom you quake in fear,
 quake even more than you in their guilt,
 They will take to their heels
 the moment you are roused. . . .

He knew that the vast majority in every society are the beasts of burden who have no time to become men. They grow up on the leavings of society's wealth, with the least food, least clothing and least education. They who toil most receive in return the largest measure of indignity. They are deprived of everything that makes life worth living. They are, as he put it, a lamp-stand bearing the lamp of civilization on their heads : people above receive light while they are smeared with the trickling oil. He had often thought of them, worked for them and felt ashamed of his own more fortunate lot. He had been forced to the conclusion that poverty and inequality were perhaps the inevitable concomitants of a progressive society. "Thus I thought within myself : It is necessary that a section of our society should remain on the top ; and how could they remain on the top if there were no one at the bottom ? . . . Civilization begins only when man extends his vision beyond the bounds of mere livelihood. The finest fruits of civilization have grown on the fields of leisure. The progress of civilization demands leisure." It was therefore necessary that the majority should labour and toil so that the minority should have the necessary leisure. The utmost that the fortunate upper classes can do is to regard themselves as trustees for the welfare of the dispossessed and try to ameliorate their misery. "But the trouble is that we cannot do anything of a permanent nature as a matter of charity. If we seek to do good to any one from the outside, that goodness becomes distorted in a number of ways. Real helpfulness emanates from a perfect sense of equality. Whatever it may be, I simply could not satisfactorily solve this complex problem for myself. And yet I felt ashamed of myself to be forced to the conclusion that the pyramid of civilization could only be built on the subjection and dehumanisation of the vast majority in human society—the workers of the world."

He had already come to believe, even before he went to Russia, that the moral right to the land belonged to the peasant and that the peasant

could never improve his condition in India except through co-operative farming. But it was not a problem that an individual could solve by his own efforts. That the State alone could and should do it he never realized till he visited the land of the Soviets. His own experience of the nature of the State in his country had only taught him to mistrust its powers. But in Russia he for the first time saw a State that was truly of the people and for the people, even if not wholly by the people. He was not misled by the obvious lack of the so-called civilized comforts which were paraded in the other cities of Europe. On the contrary he was pleased that "the polish of luxury is altogether absent from Moscow. . . . The thing I like best in Russia is the complete banishment of this barbarity of the pride of wealth."

Nor was this modern Rishi scandalised by the so-called godless nature of the Soviet State. "For many centuries the old philosophy of theology and the old philosophy of politics overpowered the intelligence of the Russian people, and almost their very life itself. The Soviet Revolutionists have now killed these two evils to their very roots. My heart leaps with joy to see such a painfully enslaved nation attain such a great liberation in such a short time. For the religion that destroys the freedom of the mind of man by keeping him ignorant is a worse enemy than the worst of monarchs; for the monarch crushes the spirit of his subjects only from the outside. . . . The Soviet has saved the nation from the hands of the insults of the Czar and from the self-inflicted insults of its own people. Let the theologians of other countries condemn Soviet Russia all they want; but I cannot condemn her, and I do not. Atheism is much better than superstition in religion and the tyranny of the Czar, which were like heavy loads of stone on the breast of Russia." Indeed, he goes on to say that it was only in Soviet Russia that he fully realized the meaning of these words of the Upanishads: *mā gridah*—Do not covet. "Why should one not covet? Because everything in this universe is but one network of truth. Personal greed stands in the way of the realization of this oneness. *Tena tyaktena bhuñjithāb*—Enjoy only that which issues from this unity. From the material point of view the Bolsheviks are expounding this same truth. They consider the general welfare of humanity as the one supreme truth on earth. So they are willing to share equally all that society produces as one. The greed of wealth is the natural concomitant of personal ownership of property. They want to abolish this first, and then declare: Enjoy only that which comes from this unity."

This is no doubt too idealistic an interpretation of the Bolshevik urge. What is, however, significant is the poet's genuine enthusiasm at the spectacle of a society that had for the first time in history provided equal opportunities of health, education and happiness to all its citizens, irrespective of race, colour or religion. His enthusiasm was all the more sincere because he himself came from a country where these opportunities were effectively denied to the vast majority of his countrymen. Again and again he contrasted what he saw in Russia with what he found at home. "The most costly tax we pay for our weakness," he wrote from Russia, "is the fact that instead of trying to remove the causes for contempt, the British are busy proving to the world that we are worthy of contempt. Sound education automatically solves all problems of human society. We are deprived of that boon in India, for the British 'Law and Order' leaves no room for any other improvement. After providing for 'Law and Order' the treasury is totally empty. . . . The tale of our Hindu-Moslem quarrels is spread over the world by interested parties. Here, too, in olden days, the Christians fought with the Jews most barbarously. But education and good government have banished such communal quarrels from Russia for ever. I often think that Mr. Simon and his Commission should have visited Soviet Russia before coming to India."

Tagore was not a blind admirer of whatever he saw in the Soviet Union. He was aware of the ruthless nature of the Party dictatorship and of the many moral limitations of the Soviet experiment. But these defects did not make him lose his perspective. He did not miss the wood for the trees. He knew that a certain element of barbarism was inevitable in such a great and violent upheaval as the Bolshevik Revolution, but he trusted the great creative urge behind the revolution and believed that if those who held the destiny of Russia in their hands were true to that urge, they would gradually and in the long run eliminate the crudities one by one. They had made a great beginning and were educating the masses, and once the masses were properly educated, they would themselves act as a healthy check on their rulers. He wrote :

"I admit that dictatorship is a great nuisance and I also believe that in its name many persecutions take place in Russia. Its negative aspect is compulsion, which is sin. But I have also seen its positive aspect, and that is education, the very reverse of force. If the mind of the people is one in the making of the country's fortunes its activity becomes creative and permanent. To the zealots of authority the only means of obtaining their ends is to keep everybody else's mind paralysed by ignorance. In

the reign of the Tzars people's mind deprived of education was under a spell and round it like a boa-constrictor coiled religious superstition. The emperor could without difficulty put this ignorance to his own use. It was then easy to provoke orgies of frightfulness in the name of religion between Jews and Christians, between Mussulmans and Armenians. The loosely knit country weakened by ignorance and religious superstition fell an easy prey to the external enemy. Nothing could be more favourable to the perpetuation of autocratic rule. . . .

"In recent years Russia has witnessed the vigorous rule of the dictator. But to perpetuate itself it has not chosen the path of the Tzars, namely the subduing of the people's mind by ignorance and religious superstition, the impairing of their manliness by the lash of the Cossacks. I do not believe that the punitive rod is inactive in the present Russian regime, but at the same time education expands with extraordinary vigour. The reason is that greed of individual or party power and of money is absent. There exists the irrepressible will to convert the public to a particular economic doctrine and to make a man of everybody, irrespective of race, colour and class. Had it not been so, one must needs agree with the French pedant who said that to give education is a great mistake.

"Time is not yet to say whether the economic doctrine is completely valid, because so long it had tottered among books : never before had it enjoyed freedom so fearlessly and over so vast a field. At the very outset they ruthlessly banished the powerful greed which would have jeopardised this economic theory. Nobody can definitely say what final shape it will take as it passes through one experiment after another. But this much is certain that the education, which at long last the Russian masses are so freely and abundantly enjoying, has improved and brought honour to their humanity for all time.

"One always hears rumours of cruelty of the present regime in Russia—which is not improbable. It is unlikely that her long tradition of cruel administration will disappear suddenly. At the same time the Soviet Government is untiring in its efforts to inculcate by means of pictorial and cinematographic interpretation of history the horrors of the system of government and oppression under the old order. If the present Government in its turn should adopt a similarly ruthless policy, it must be called a strange mistake, if nothing else, to create so strong an aversion to cruel treatment. At any rate, to defame Sirāj-ud-daula for the Black Hole tragedy by cinema and other means and at the same time to perpetrate the Jallianwalla massacre would not unfairly be called the height of stupidity,

because in this case the weapon is likely to turn against the thrower himself.

"It is obvious that a violent effort is being made to cast public opinion in Soviet Russia into the mould of Marxian economics ; out of this obstinacy free discussion on this topic has been deliberately stifled. I believe accusation on this score to be true. A similar attempt was made during the last European War to muzzle public opinion of people opposed to the government policy by imprisonment and hanging.

"Where the temptation for quick result is too strong, the political leaders are loth to respect man's right to liberty of opinion. They are wont to say : 'Let us attain our objectives first : we shall attend to other things later.' The situation in Russia resembles wartime conditions. She is beset with enemies at home and abroad. There is no end to manoeuvring all round to wreck the entire experiment. The foundations of their structure therefore must be strengthened as quickly as possible ; hence they have no qualms about using force. Nevertheless, however insistent the necessity may be, force is one-sided. It destroys, but does not create. The process of creation is twofold. Its raw material has to be assimilated not by coercion, but by the recognition of its inner nature.

"Russia is engaged in the task of making the road to a new age ; of tearing up the root of ancient beliefs and customs from their ancient soil ; of penalising the luxury of time-honoured habits. When man finds himself in the whirl of destructive frenzy, he is carried off his feet by its intoxication. Conceit grows ; he forgets that human nature has to be wooed ; he thinks that it is enough to tear it up from its old moorings. Who cares what happens afterwards ? Those who have not the patience to wait for human nature to come to terms in its own time believe in persecution ; what they finally build up overnight by violence cannot be relied upon ; it cannot support the burden of permanency. . . .

"Bolshevism originates in this inhuman background of modern civilization. It is like the storm which rushes in all fury flashing its lightning-teeth when the pressure is low in the atmosphere. This unnatural revolution has broken out because human society has lost its harmony. It is because the individual's contempt for the community had been growing that the suicidal proposal of sacrificing the individual in the name of collectivity has arisen. It is like proclaiming the sea to be the only friend when the volcano is causing trouble on the shore. It is only when the real nature of this shoreless sea is known that one becomes impatient to get back to the shore. Man will never tolerate for all time,

the unreality of individual-less collectivity. The strongholds of greed in society must be conquered and controlled, but who will protect the society, if the individual is to be banished for good? It is not improbable that in this age Bolshevism is the treatment, but medical treatment cannot be eternal; indeed the day on which the doctor's regime comes to an end must be hailed as the red-letter day for the patient.

"I pray for the victory of the co-operative principle in the production and control of the wealth of our villages, for it recognises human nature in not scorning the desire and opinion of the co-operators. Nothing succeeds by antagonising human nature."

The poet must have been deeply moved when a young woman from the Caucasian Republic said to the interpreter: "Please tell the poet that we, the citizens of the Caucasian Republic, fully realize that ever since the October Revolution we have come to know what real freedom and happiness are. We are engaged in creating a new era for humanity. . . . Please tell the poet that the varied races of the Soviet Union want to send through him their hearty sympathies to the people of India. I can assure him that, if it were possible, I would not mind leaving my home and hearth, my children and relatives, in order to go to India to help her people."

How ironical these words sound today! The poet did not live to see the Soviet Union "engaged in creating a new era for Humanity", hand in glove with British Imperialism. He was happily spared the painful knowledge that the Soviet Union is perhaps the only country in the world today where there seems to exist more or less a complete black-out on Indian news. The head of the Soviet State regularly exchanges loving fraternal greetings with the head of the Conservative Party in England and has not a word to say for the heroic fighters of freedom's battle in India. It would have broken his heart to watch millions of his countrymen perish of hunger piteously crying for a morsel of bread, while the so-called Communists in India stood by as the watchdogs of British 'Law and Order.' Nevertheless, though the Bolshevik sympathies may have narrowed, the poet's sympathies were broad enough to have wished Russia well in her heroic struggle against the Nazi hordes. He would have rejoiced at the victorious march of the Red Armies reconquering their lost territory, even as his heart would have bled to see the unarmed freedom-fight in his own land ruthlessly suppressed by the armed might of Russia's own ally. Though he could no longer have claimed for Russia that "at least this nation of all the others in the world today is thinking of the interest of

the whole humanity, over and above the national interest", he himself would never have let his love for his land cancel his concern for the interest of humanity, and would have blessed the Allied victories even though his own helpless people have been trampled in the process.

REVIEWS

THE PARROT'S TRAINING AND OTHER STORIES. Rabindranath Tagore. Visva-Bharati. 2 College Square, Calcutta, 1944. Rs. 3/-

SATIRE can be of two kinds, personal or impersonal, malicious or generous. In English literature Pope and Swift frequently stand for the former, Dickens and Samuel Butler for the latter kind. Satire as a form of art is bound to reflect the author's personal idiosyncrasies, temperamental preferences, and last but not least of all, his way of life. The greatest satire is one which impersonally, and, as it were, objectively, expresses the writer's own convictions fearlessly and in opposition to current public opinion. Great satire, like great poetry, is, however, never didactic. Its material is and must always be the common stuff of which human experiences are made. A satire that is esoteric (the most famous instance in modern times is Wyndham Lewis's *Apes of God*) defeats its own purpose. Swift as a writer of satire is a classic, in spite of his personal feeling of frustration and bitterness, because he satirises what is common to all men: falsehood and hypocrisy, a wrong valuation of human life, intellectual and social snobbery.

The function of satire is to lead men back to sanity and a healthy attitude to things, both living and dead, in short, to make them see life in its right proportions. And if we say that awareness of truth is the only function of satire, we do not wish to insist on a commonplace idea, but rather to point out the satirist's great concern with truth, not as a poetic or aesthetic convention, but as the very aim and end of his art. A great satire is one that illumines a great truth in such a way as to heighten the awareness of the reader. To bring about that intensified awareness is indeed the function of all works of art: but satire is like the advance-guard of some army, discovering and revealing falsehood and evil, while the poet, the dramatist, the novelist, are still groping in darkness.

Tagore's satires illumine truth from many angles of vision. In this little book only four of his satires have been collected; we wish a full collection of Tagore's satirical writing could be made in the not too distant future. In these four sketches Tagore reveals himself a satirist of great power and insight. He is sufficiently detached from his subject-matter to avoid the usual pitfalls of a satirist—personal bitterness and malice: on the other hand, his treatment of the various aspects of life he wishes to satirise shows us a Tagore intensely preoccupied with the conflict between the ultimate good and man's failure to grasp it. The desire for education and learning, as in *The*

Parrot's Training, is in itself most commendable ; but the means used to achieve it defeat its own purpose and lead human beings towards a dogmatic and mechanical way of life. It is not education or knowledge that Tagore satirises in this most subtle of all his sketches, but man's lack of awareness of the truth that has to be extracted from learning and scholarship. It is not necessarily education in India that Tagore here is out to attack but education anywhere under the sun, wherever it has become fossilised and dogmatic, lacking in that inner urge which makes human beings aware of the truth behind the appearances of reality. And whether it is education or the misuse of nature by man, as in *The Trial of the Horse*, or the idea of progress in opposition to indolent self-satisfaction, as in the last two stories, Tagore always aims his satire at the apparent inability of human beings to understand what is good for them, their longing for an easy and effortless peace and their disinclination to face the truth.

Tagore is a great satirist because he is also a great poet. His concern is with the significant, his method is always symbolical. That is why he rejects the irrelevant and the particular, and deals only with what is of universal value. Despite the sketchy and fragmentary character of these stories, each one of them confronts us with a parable of universal significance. And he never preaches. Above these stories there hovers the smile of a kind and generous soul who has looked deep into life, and who, having understood so much, has nothing to forgive.

The Visva-Bharati is to be congratulated on the get-up and printing of the book.

Alex Aronson

ROMAIN ROLLAND : THE STORY OF A CONSCIENCE.

By Dr. Alex Aronson. Padma Publications Ltd. Bombay.

Price : Rs. 5/8/-.

DR. ARONSON'S book is most opportune. There are hardly any books on Romain Rolland in the English language, which is surprising, considering his eminence in the field of European literature. The English translation of Stefan Zweig's famous book on Romain Rolland has so far been the only decent and authentic account in English of the life and work of this great European. But the book was written two decades ago and does not carry the story much beyond the end of the last great war, and is moreover silent about Rolland's contacts with the East. Dr. Aronson's book should therefore be widely welcomed by readers in India whose interest in Rolland, always great, has been naturally increased by news of his death. They have known him as a novelist, as the author of *John Christopher*, and as a biographer and interpreter of Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. They have heard of him as a European Rishi, as one whose life was a sadhana. But of his actual life, the story of his struggle, its failures and its achievement, they have known but little ; for our purely English education neither qualifies nor encourages us to stray outside the orbit of English interest. Even as I write I pick out of my shelf the Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature and find that Beverley Nichols has been allotted more space therein than Romain Rolland. The fact that the latter had been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1915 is not even mentioned. A Dictionary of English Literature has

every right to leave out foreign names, but certainly not to belittle them. All this adds to the value and merit of Dr. Aronson's book which has filled a real want in our intellectual store-house.

Dr. Aronson has rightly called his book the Story of a Conscience, for, as he says in the Introduction, "the story of Romain Rolland's conscience is the story of his age. In it are reflected the moral and intellectual aspirations of innumerable individual existences, their striving for truth, their convictions, their faith. The story of this conscience is the story of solitude and isolation in the midst of a frustrated multitude which, having lost its beliefs, is aimlessly drifting in the storm of conflicting passions and ideologies." This representative character of Rolland's struggles invests his life with an added significance. Its tragedy becomes the tragedy of European conscience, its nobility holds out hope for Europe's future. It also shows that though people talk glibly of European Culture, how difficult in fact it is for one to feel and act as a European in the midst of the ferocious nationalisms of the peoples of Europe. The life of Romain Rolland is at once a warning and an inspiration to those who would rise above the passions and limitations of their own people.

In so far as Romain Rolland's life may be considered a tragedy, it was the tragedy of an artist's sensibility burdened with a Christian's sensitive conscience. A delicate, sensitive youth happily growing under the exquisite, intoxicating influence of Shakespeare and Beethoven, was suddenly challenged by Tolstoy's condemnation of most of what had hitherto been accepted as great art as worthless and corrupt, "good more or less to provide excitement to old rakes, or relaxation to comfortable idlers." This challenge was the first test of Rolland's conscience. The second came when the Great War of 1914 exposed the hollowness of the Western civilization and revealed the fatal contradiction between its pretended humanism and the devouring greed of its rival imperialisms. What was the duty of an artist in such an armageddon? Should he act or should he merely watch? Before Rolland could adequately solve this problem, he was faced with a double challenge from the East and the West. Gandhi's way or Lenin's way? In the opinion of the present reviewer, Rolland failed adequately to solve this last and the greatest of all modern problems. His mind remained divided till the outbreak of the present War. What his reactions were to the present war, we have no means of knowing.

The book under review traces the story of Rolland's conscience upto 1939. The story is well told, with sympathy and with critical insight. Every chapter of the book is worth reading. The last two chapters—"The Knowledge of the East" and "Political Re-orientation"—are particularly interesting, for the material in them is not to be found in any other biography of Rolland. The author has done well to reprint in the Appendix Rolland's first letter to Tolstoy and the latter's reply. These two letters are a remarkable document which every one interested in the problem of art and humanity should read and deeply ponder. We congratulate the learned author on this excellent book.

EDUCATION, POLITICS AND WAR: By Sir S. Radhakrishnan.

The International Book Service, Poona. Price Rs. 5/.

INDIA AND CHINA: By Sir S. Radhakrishnan. Hind Kitabs, Bombay.

Price Rs. 6/-

C. E. M. JOAD, in his "Counter Attack from the East" where he discusses Radhakrishnan's philosophy with an enthusiastic appreciation, characterizes him as the liaison officer between the East and the West: "It is as a philosophical bilingualist that while interpreting the traditional wisdom of the East to compose the current distractions of the West, he brings the force and energy of the West to vitalize the apathy of the East." Joad has but stated what is universally accepted as a fact. None indeed is better equipped for the task in the present-day India than Radhakrishnan. And he has been faithfully performing this self-imposed task for very many years past through his writings and lectures and addresses to public bodies. Some of these latter have now been collected and presented in neatly printed volumes to the public by the above two enterprising publishing firms of Western India. But for their enterprise these valuable addresses might have remained buried in the columns of newspapers.

Education, Politics and War contains 24 such addresses and, so far as the subjects named in their relation to present-day India are concerned, they will be found illuminating in their respective presentations. A perusal of the entire volume is needed for a full appreciation of its contents. A few passages, culled at random, may, however, serve the purpose of introducing the readers to Radhakrishnan's views on subjects of living interest to us at the present time. Speaking on Education and Spiritual Freedom at an Educational Conference at Cheltenham in 1937, when the world was seemingly at peace, he pointed out: "The condition of our times is similar to the India of Buddha or the Greece of Pericles with its weakening of traditional authority and rise of self-conscious egoism. If we are not to fall away into the subjectivism and anarchy of thought and morals of the Sophists, we have to attain to the spiritual individualism and freedom of Buddha or a Socrates. If we are to launch the world afresh, we must set up a new ideal of spiritual life. The scattered elements of knowledge and the detached specialism require the subtle alchemy of spirit to transform them into wisdom." Speaking at another such Conference in India half a dozen years later, with the whole world in convulsion, he follows up the strain: "This feverish age, where life is lived at the highest pressure, teaches us, that while it is necessary to perfect the intellect, it is even more necessary to refine the spirit. If the present world convulsion is to emerge in a new and better world order, we must acquire a living faith in love and wisdom. Here again, the Orient, with its distinctive message of wisdom in education, of the need for quiet, the quiet not of inaction but of harmony, of faith in the ultimates which shine through the vast uncertainties hanging over the march of life, can offer a corrective to the miscarriage of the world. The world is one family and its brotherhood of the future should be based on heart and mind and not on chains and fear." In politics, Radhakrishnan is a believer in Democracy "not because it is a fine political arrangement" but because to him it is "the highest religion." In his opinion, the failure of the communists is due to their not being sufficiently democratic. He has however a good word to say about the Congress Socialists "who are pledged to non-

violence and democracy." and he differentiates them from other Socialists because "they (the Congress Socialists) want a Socialism which does not fetter the civil liberties of the individual." He warns us from adopting highly revolutionary doctrines from outside as they might result in reducing India to a cockpit of warring creeds : "It is essential for us to develop on our own foundations and not copy the doctrines and ideologies of other countries." A year before the war started, he had declared, "If we wish to make it impossible for any nation to grab what it wants by force, we must make it possible for every nation to achieve what is just without force." And this is what he feels constrained to utter after four years of war : "If the military victory is to be followed by a post-war period of noble professions and craven deeds, as it happened in the last war, the enormous price we pay for it, will be paid in vain and it will be a sacrifice of the best for the worst."

India and China consists of seven selected addresses delivered in China by Radhakrishnan during his brief visit there in 1944 at the invitation of the Chinese Government. There is besides a fairly lengthy introduction contributed by himself for this particular edition which has a distinct value of its own apart from the addresses proper. These addresses will give the reader a true measure of his knowledge in Chinese lore which indeed is as wide as it is deep and penetrating. In his first address at the welcome Banquet, he dwells on the relations between China and India—relations established mainly through the movement of scholars between the two countries from the sixth century B. C. to the eleventh century A. D. followed by a lull owing to political vicissitudes in both countries, till it was revived in the twentieth century by the visit of Rabindranath Tagore to China in 1924, followed up, we might add, by that of Jawaharlal Nehru and Radhakrishnan himself on one side, and on the other by the visits to India of Marshal and Madame Chiang Kai Shek, Dr. Tai Chi-tao, Dr. Ku and others. "All these centuries we have met as friends and comrades in the pursuit of learning and the cultivation of virtue and not as rivals and exploiters. Our civilizations which are of great antiquity and of unbroken continuity possess a common cultural and spiritual background. They have similar ideals of human life and fellowship. On the political plane our relations have been a unique example of good-neighbourly behaviour. We have not suffered from the distrust and fear of the foreigner." About the three prevalent religious systems in China, namely Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, it is interesting to follow Radhakrishnan in his thesis that the three systems instead of antagonising do but complement each other : "If Confucianism in its later forms serves as a religion it is because its social emphasis was backed by a spiritual faith. The satisfaction of the metaphysical need and the spiritual aspirations of man was secured by the acceptance of the religious postulates of Jainism and Buddhism." In the last address which was delivered before an audience composed of "distinguished leaders in the diplomatic field and earnest students of international affairs," Radhakrishnan presents a comprehensive review of the war and fearlessly, though with complete dispassion, tackles the problem of world security. This lengthy address is well-documented and is an intellectual treat to read. And who is there in these days, unwise enough not to agree with his finding, or heed his warning : "If we love peace, if we wish to shorten the agony, if the military victories are to be swifter and their cost less terrible, the allies should use the political arm in unison and

strength. If they now and here declare that they will maintain and guarantee the independence of all small states, including the Balkan States, of all dependencies and colonies, the policies of the latter would swing into a new channel and even the Axis Powers may sue for peace. Have we the vision and the courage, the strength and the spirit of sacrifice for this great achievement?"

The volume has been very well edited. The addresses contain copious footnotes; there are seven appendices and an Index. All these go to make the volume a valuable addition to the reference library of any publicist in any part of the world.

K. G.

BEST STORIES OF MODERN BENGAL: Volume One · Edited by Dilip K.

Gupta and translated by Nilima Devi. Published by The Signet Press,
Calcutta. Price—Rs. 5. War Surcharge Rs. 1/12/-

A GREAT literature by reason of its wide human appeal breaks through narrow geographical barriers. The living voice of a people speaks through its literature and to an ever-enlarging audience. And nowhere does the nation's pulse throb so distinctly as in its short stories. There one sees the nation as it lives and loves, hates and fights, smiles and weeps.

The development of Bengali short story during the last quarter of a century has been phenomenal. Although Rabindranath Tagore dominated till the end of his life the entire field of Bengali literature, including that of short stories, we notice as early as 1925 the emergence of a band of young writers who had drunk deep in the springs of continental literature and at the same time were keenly alive to the changing conditions within the country itself. These talented young men, whose advent into the arena was welcomed by Rabindranath himself, immediately started bold experiments in this particular form of literature which gave proper scope to their contemporary awareness. The romantic tradition was seriously challenged by some who gave themselves out as stern realists. Some looked at life with the eyes of a hardened cynic, others with the objective outlook of a cold intellectual, and yet others kept loyal to the old romantic fervour. The total result was an enrichment of the language and literature, an extension of their scope and content and introduction of a vigour and vitality hitherto unknown.

Bengal's vast and varied contribution to literature has for some time past been attracting the attention of a large reading public outside Bengal. The Signet Press has done a signal service to the cause of Bengali literature by presenting some of the best stories of Modern Bengal to non-Bengali readers through an English translation of the same. The selection covers a wide range and 'would give, as Lin Yutang says, 'some intimate glimpses of Bengal life.' The translation, to say the least, is excellent in as much as it retains much of the interest and charm of the original. Translation is always a delicate and difficult task; and more so where the tone and feel of one language differs so widely as between Bengali and English. Nilima Devi deserves to be congratulated on the remarkable ease and felicity with which she has succeeded in her difficult task.

And what a beautiful production! It heartens a book-lover to come across such an excellently got-up publication in these days of acute paper shortage. We shall

naturally look forward to the companion volume, where we are promised we shall have 'not only stories written by the more celebrated and mature among the modern writers but also several of these written by the most promising of the rising generation.'

A feature of the present volume are the notes on the authors—vignettes which are studies in miniature and admirably assess the most salient characteristics of the individual authors.

K. Roy

THE CHINESE EXODUS: By Prof. J. C. Daruvala. Hind Kitabs,
267, Hornby Road, Bombay. Price : Rs. 4/8/-

THE WRITER, PROF. J. C. DARUVALA, was a professor of Foreign Languages at the National Political Institute, Chungking, 1943-44. During his stay of six months there, he travelled widely in Free China, saw and observed at first hand the country and its people as they are today, and wrote down his impressions with the sympathetic understanding of an Asiatic.

The twelve chapters into which the book is divided cover a wide range :—China : Unity in Diversity ; the Kuomintang : Principles and Administration ; Economics : Currency and Inflation ; Agriculture, Food and Industries ; Education and the War ; Philosophy and Religion ; National Characteristics ; the Emancipation of Women ; the Generalissimo : his views ; The War and its effects ; Cultural Life and Thought ; The Future. Besides, there are five Appendices, two maps and five illustrations. The book is informative, and though the emphasis naturally is on conditions as in 1944, the author has given a brief survey of the whole history of China, of the country and the people. What we miss in the book is depth of observation and insight. It is a little too obvious that the author has culled most of his knowledge from the China Hand Book and other official documents. His information too seems to be rather one-sided. Though one can disagree with the other Chinese Parties and may even criticise them, one cannot leave them out of the picture in a book like this.

Appendices are useful, though brief. The one on "the Chinese Languages" says that this language has no accent and not much of grammatical inflection,—which is incorrect. All the captions describing the illustrations are wrong, except the one on the frontispiece ; e. g. to face page 16, for "Reading a Scroll" read "Portraits of the God of Longevity, the God of Good Fortune and the God of Wealth and Emolument" ; to face page 17, for "The Goddess of Mercy" read "Avalokiteśvara" ; to face page 32, for "Emperor and Attendant" read "General Kūan Yu and Chou Tsang of the Three Kingdoms."

Despite these minor defects, the book is well worth reading. Indian readers will find it both interesting and informative.

Divakaropadhyaya

PREMCHAND : By Madan Gopal.

The Bookabode, 119, Circular Rd., Lahore, 1944.

HERE is a delectable and breezy little introduction, written in English, to the genius of Munshi Premchand. Since Premchand served the apprenticeship of his craft in the school of life, a study of his works naturally plunges us into the mighty stream of our lives and times. This small book which purports to cover so wide a range is a daring venture, the merit of which should be appraised not by the achievement but by the endeavour. The bibliography of books by and on Premchand appended at the end of this study will prove very useful to all readers. We look forward to the appearance of an elaborate and critical study of Premchand, by the author, of which he has held out a promise.

M. Bajpai.

AND ONE DID NOT COME BACK : By Khwaja Ahmad Abbas.

Sound Magazine (Publication Dept.) Sir P. M. Road, 1944. Price : Rs. 2/8/-

THIS thrilling tale of the Indian Congress Medical Mission to China is so vividly and realistically told that we feel as though we had actually witnessed the perilous events that took place in the war-torn and blood-smeared China, during the five Indian doctors' sojourn there. India's sympathy and noble sentiment by sending this medical mission to China has touched the hearts of the Chinese people and won their lasting gratitude. This gesture of good will does not merely serve as a symbol of revival of the old acquaintance, but at the same time creates a new and closer comradeship between the two age-old sister nations, India and China. Dr. Kotnis, who offered his life to the noble cause of China, which is also the cause of justice and world peace, is known in China as *Chungkiao Haitzu*—son of China. His death is one more link between India and China. Mr. Abbas deserves to be congratulated for having written this excellent book.

Fachow.

SOVIET ASIA : THE POWER BEHIND U. S. S. R. By K. S. Hirlekar.

Foreword by Sir S. Radhakrishnan. Published by Avanti Prakashan,
Bombay, 14. Sole distributors : Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay.

THIS book contains a graphic presentation of the rapid march of a backward people towards power and material well-being. There are some good maps which help the reader in following the descriptions, and the tables of figures give us a sense of precision as also of objectivity of study, which the author seems to claim as his method. His claim is not unjust, though he has not wholly concealed his great enthusiasm for the Moscow experts whom he quotes abundantly. The purpose of this book is mainly to inform ; propaganda, if it is there at all, is very subtle and pardonable. We are impressed by the vast achievements of the people of the 'Heartland'—Northern Russia and Siberia ; we see rapid developments in agriculture and industry, education and health, and above all, in national consciousness. The author is constantly telling us

how behind all these developments there works the planned economy of the Soviet Government, how the centrifugal and centripetal forces are balanced, and unity in diversity achieved. The problem of the different races and languages is solved by means of a thoroughly generous and long-sighted principle of equality and freedom. The author writes on page 22; "The very *raison d'être* of this volume is to make our countrymen realise how determined the directors of Soviet economy have been to develop this "heartland". He also expresses the view in the Introduction that India can learn much from an objective study of the Russian enterprise. We agree to this, but certainly we cannot go so far as to appreciate the lines on the flap—"The revaluation of life's aims and ambitions which the central Asian peoples have learnt from the Moscow experts is a wonderful phenomenon which has a deep meaning for India." We can only concede that the phenomenon is suggestive. We believe that India's problem is very different in many respects and her aims and aspirations are very often confused with those of the so-called progressive countries that cannot see a way out of recurring wars. The printing and get-up of the book are excellent. So are the illustrations.

P. J. C.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN INDIA : Past and Present. By Anathnath Basu.
The Book Emporium Ltd. August, 1944. PP. VIII+166+XLVII :
Price Rs. 4/-

SREEJUT ANATHNATH BASU is the head of the Teachers' Training Department of the Calcutta University and is undoubtedly one of the most competent authorities to write on University Education in India. The book under review, however, is not intended to be as thorough and comprehensive as its name would suggest. It is, as the author says in the preface, only a "bird's-eye view of the development of university education in this country." His main purpose has been "to survey specially the growth of modern Indian Universities and also to study some of their major problems."

In the ten chapters of the book the author maintains a fairly logical scheme. The first chapter gives a very brief account of the ancient and medieval Indian Universities, thereby setting up an appropriate background for the study of the modern period. The next eight chapters trace the history of university education in India upto the present. In the tenth or the last chapter the author considers some of the basic problems of Indian university education. There he enunciates that, "the major functions of a university are, conservation of learning, interpretation of learning and advancement of learning." With this end in view he pleads for "the autonomy of our universities", and for "ample State-aid". "But," he adds, "if the State is to grant freedom and funds, the universities too, in their turn, must organise their work properly; they must be careful that they do not waste public funds or abuse their liberty. . . . A university is the custodian of the culture of a nation" (p. 145).

The book closes with five (A-E) appendices of relevant extracts from several important official documents which are not easily accessible to lay readers, a "selected"

Bibliography, and two tables—one on 'Universities in India', taken from the Eleventh Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India 1937-42, and another on 'Enrolment in Universities in India 1941-42', taken from the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Post-war Educational Development in India.

The author seems to have imposed upon himself a rather rigid rule when we hear him say : "Nor have I included in it (the book) the Indian Women's University of Bombay, the Visvabharati of Santiniketan, the Kasi Vidyapith of Benares and similar other institutions, because their degrees and diplomas are not recognised and they were not created either by acts of legislatures or by regulations promulgated by authorities which have a constitutional status with the Government of India" (chap. IX. pp. 105-6). Has it not the effect of stultifying much of his serious remarks in course of the book, especially those in chapters V and X ? A brief account, or even a proper mention of them in an additional section of the appendix would surely have thrown a few significant rays on the State-acknowledged University Education in India, and would have helped to reveal it in its true perspective.

One word more ; "The Imperial Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa" (see page 117, last line) is now a myth. It was transferred, or should we say 'transplanted', from there long before the publication of this book, and is now at 'New Pusa' in Delhi.

Nirmalchandra Chattopadhyaya.

THE GANDHIAN PLAN : By S. N. Agarwal ; Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi.
Padma Publications, Ltd., Bombay, 1944.

THE name of the book is slightly misleading for the plan does not emanate from Gandhiji ;—although, as he makes it clear in his brief Foreword, there is nothing in the book contrary to his ideas. But this is somewhat of a negative qualification.

The brochure consists of three distinct parts. The first, covering some 53 pages, is an excellent dissertation on the theoretical background of Gandhian economics. The author has a lucid style and uses numerous quotations with dexterity. Even if one does not agree with the thesis presented, this part of the book is worth reading.

The second part is somewhat scrappy and covers jottings of what the author deems necessary in different fields of economic and social planning. This part merely gives an idea of the many-sidedness of our economic problem.

The third and last part, or what is really such, begins from page 104 and covers only the last eleven pages. There the author sums up his proposals in terms of financial outlay and sources of income. He envisages an expenditure of some 3,500 crores and is apologetic of this small figure which he has not been able to exceed in view of India's poverty.

The main thesis underlying the plan is that instead of a world economy in which raw materials and finished products are carried forward and backward over long distances, we should go back to village economy where each region produces most of the necessities for itself and exports only the surplus. This principle, when once accepted and acted upon, could reduce competition from markets and economise the national expenditure on transport and distribution.

The proposal is certainly logical but can hardly be practised under a laissez-faire regime with expanding facilities of transport. In olden times this was actually the practice because transport was difficult. So if we are to adopt this principle now we shall have to arrange for a government agency artificially enforcing such restrictions as had been enforced naturally by the absence of transport in bygone times. And this involves a restriction of freedom of the individual and control by a central agency which the Gandhian Plan does not favour. How then is the aim to be achieved? In other words, decentralization was the natural outcome of a particular level of material culture. And if it is to be achieved in the present day of aeroplanes and wireless, such decentralization will have to be enforced and maintained through a central agency. It is wrong to believe that centralization was altogether the outcome of government policy; it would be more correct to say that it was inventions such as the railways and telegraphs, which led to the growth of centralization.

Dr. H. Amir Ali.

YOUR FOOD: By M. R. Masani. Tata Studies in Current Affairs. Published for Tata Sons Limited by Padma Publications Ltd, Bombay.

Price : One rupee.

FOOD is the most vital necessity of life. Man can do without most other things, but not without food. Nature has not provided food for him free and abundant as the air he breathes. He has to struggle for it. He must also know what to eat and why. When food is plentiful and can be easily bought for a few coins, we just don't think about it. But the war and the attendant famine have forced us to ask many questions. Why haven't we enough to eat in India? Is the soil of India poor and barren, or are we too many mouths to feed? How much does a man need to eat to keep him healthy and active? Why do our people fall so easy a victim to disease? Why can't our people be as well nourished, healthy and energetic as people in some other countries are? These are natural questions which every young boy and girl must ask. But the answers are not so easily available. Our school texts tell us all about the virtues of the Tudors and the vices of the Stuarts in England, but precious little about the vital problems of our own people. The Tatas have therefore earned public merit in sponsoring this excellent and useful publication. They could not have got a better writer to write it than the author of *Our India*. He has a gift of lucid exposition, of explaining difficult and dull details in a simple, homely and chatty style which immediately holds one's attention. He knows how to keep the essential and eliminate the unessential. These are rare gifts for our Indian writers, most of whom tend to be prolix and pedantic. We hope this book will be eagerly taken up as a text book in our schools and will also be translated in the different Indian languages, so as to reach the widest possible circle of readers. It tells us things which every one, young and old, should know, and tells them in a way which few can tell. It is decently got-up and profusely illustrated. Our only criticism is that the illustrations are disappointing when we recall the excellent illustrations in the author's previous book, *Our India*. It would have been worth while for the Tatas, in the interest of their great name, to have spent more generously on the illustrations and the general get-up of the book.

K. K.



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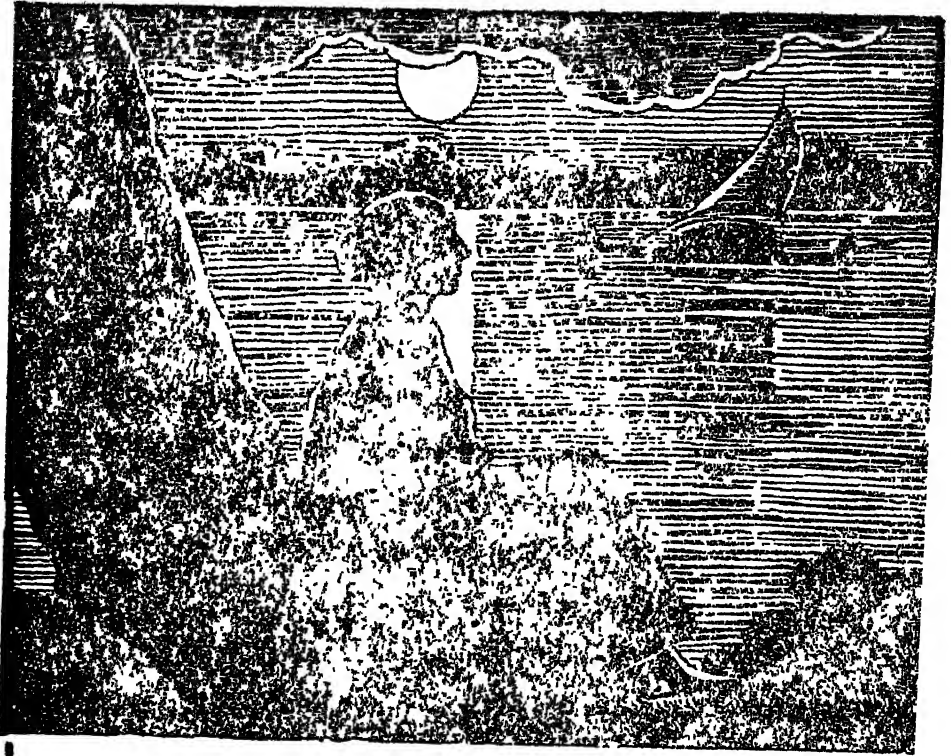
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